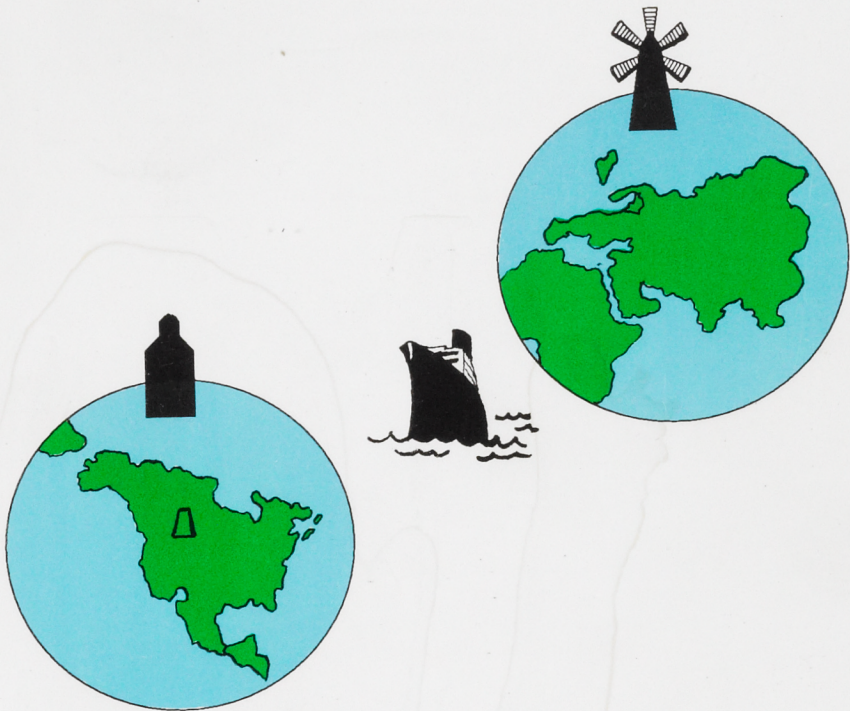


From Windmills to Prairies



B. H. FAST

The Story of
Mennonite Migrations
to the
Saskatchewan Valley

**FROM
WINDMILLS
TO
PRAIRIES**

B.H. FAST

FROM
WINDMILLS
TO
PRAIRIES

Produced without copyright by B.H. Fast, Saskatoon,
Saskatchewan in 1991.

Copies available from the author.

Price: \$7.00 per copy.

Since this book is intended for the sole purpose of recording the history of Mennonite Migrations, there is no copyright. This publication may be reproduced in part without the permission of the author, but should, when quoted, be appropriately acknowledged as a matter of literary ethics.

For technical assistance and production the author acknowledges with gratitude the work of Ken English, Zita Fouillard, Carolyn Wasilenko, and Dr. R.G. Fast.

FOREWORD

Seldom do people appreciate the amount of historical and statistical research required to develop a family history. However, to report on and develop a genealogy of six generations is indeed a monumental task requiring countless hours of correspondence, interviews, research into records, and writing - not to mention the actual layout, typesetting and general production of the final document.

But this is more than a Genealogy. FROM WINDMILLS TO PRAIRIES is a story of a people in transition. It traces the movements of the Mennonite people from their origins in Holland; as they resettled in Russia and other parts of Europe; to their current North American home in the Prairie Provinces of Canada. It is a history of these people and their values. As the author suggests, it is the story of a people without a history, and as such it will make a valuable contribution to a body of knowledge that continues to have some gaps.

Since the book is intended as well to record the personal history of the Fast-Thiessen families, the last two chapters are devoted to a genealogy. To those of us who are part of this huge family, it is a meaningful history which we and our future generations will always treasure. The maps in the book begin to answer the time-worn questions about our origins. The script explains them in more detail. The photographs will preserve a bit of history in pictorial form. For all of these reasons the book will be widely read, and of interest to many people outside of the group.

When one considers the quantity of information available, a few omissions are quickly overlooked, and we become grateful that the author undertook a task of this magnitude to record for future generations the Fast-Thiessen Story - most appropriately titled FROM WINDMILLS TO PRAIRIES.

Raymond Garry Fast
Generation IV
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
July 20, 1991

PREFACE

One hundred years ago a group of Conference Mennonites in Russia saw the storm clouds looming above the political horizon. To evade the problems to be endured by their people, they made application to leave the country, and sent delegates to Canada to prepare for an exodus of a comparatively small group - 900 in total. The Revolution of 1917 followed by trials and persecutions of untold severity resulted in the emigration of much greater numbers in the decade of the 1920s.

Generally the present generation is not familiar with this group who have long been regarded as *The People Without A History*. Since historians offer little information on this small but unique sect, it is fitting that at this time we should trace their history from its early beginning in the 16th century to the present day. Furthermore, according to Deuteronomy 32:7 we are to: "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."

On this one hundredth anniversary of the coming of the Conference Mennonite people to make their home on the Canadian Prairies, it is appropriate that we remember our forebears, remember the years of many generations, pay tribute to them and pass their story on to our descendants. May the present and future generations find this brief history interesting, informative, inspiring, and challenging.

Dedication With Pride in the Past Pleasure in the Present and Faith in the Future

This book is dedicated to the past, present, and future generations of the Fast-Thiessen Family.

B.H. Fast
July 20, 1991

FROM WINDMILLS TO PRAIRIES

PROLOGUE

Oft In The Stilly Night

Oft in the stilly night
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me:
The smiles, the tears,
Of boyhood years,
The words of love then spoken;
The eyes that shone,
Now dimmed and gone,
The cheerful hearts now broken!
Thus in the stilly night
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Sad memory brings the light
Of other days around me.

When I remember all
The friends so linked together
I've seen around me fall
Like leaves in wintry weather,
I feel like one Who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled,
Whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed!
Thus in the stilly night
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Sad memory brings the light
Of other days around me.

Thomas Moore

CONTENTS

Chapter I	Introduction	1
Chapter II	Mennonites In Holland	4
Chapter III	Emigration To Prussia And Danzig	7
Chapter IV	Taking Roots In Russia	10
Chapter V	Mennonite Music Lost And Regained	14
Chapter VI	Waves Of Canadian Immigrants	20
	Wave Number One	20
	Wave Number Two	23
	Wave Number Three	25
	World War I, 1914-1918 And After .	26
Chapter VII	Pioneers Of The 1890s	33
	Our Forebears Arrive	33
	Fuel For The Pioneer Home	44
	Food For The Family	45
	Railways And Towns	47
	Surveying The Western Territories .	48
	Education	50
	GEA - Dates Of Interest - RJC . . .	53
	Religion	56

Chapter VIII	Emigrants Of The 1920s	59
	In Search Of Freedom	59
	Demetrovka To Southampton	62
	Southampton To Rosthern	66
	Life In Canada	68
	The Great Depression	72
	Wave Three Complements Wave One And Two	75
Chapter IX	Mennonite Conferences	77
	MWC Assembly Locations And Themes	78
	Name Derivations	79
	Historical Events In Chronological Order	82
Chapter X	The Bernhard And Mary (Thiessen) Fast Family	85
	Raymond Garry Fast	89
	Lindsay Wayne Fast	91
	Dolores Joan Fast	92
Chapter XI	Genealogy	94
	Bibliography	117
	Epilogue	118

PICTURES AND MAPS

1. Molotschna	13
2. Page out of the 980 page Gesangbuch	17
3. Four part music by Ziffern	18
4. Gesangbuch mit Noten	19
5. Rules for Teachers	21
6. Waves of Emigrants to Canada	30
7. Wehrlos und Verlassen	31
Inoffensive and Neglected	32
8. Grandparents - Johann and Maria Fast	34
9. Grandparents - Heinrich and Margaretha Epp	34
10. Jacob and Helena Fast	35
11. Home of Jacob and Helena Fast	35
12. Passport of Jacob Fast	36
13. Birthplace of Helena (Epp) Fast	37
14. Birthplace of Jacob Fast	38
15. Homestead Application - Jacob Fast	39
16. The Saskatchewan Valley	40
17. Homestead Title of Jacob Fast	43
18. German-English Academy and Rosthern Junior College	55
19. The Thiessen Family Church Register	60
20. The CPR Symbol	64
21. Mary (Thiessen) Fast Medical Certificate	64
22. The Thiessen Journey from Arkadak to Southampton	65
23. The Canadian Pacific S.S. Melita	66
24. Grandparents - Johann and Aganetha (Block) Bergen	67
25. Mary (Thiessen) Fast Immigration Identification Card	68
26. Grandmother - Helena Thiessen	69
27. John Thiessen Hauling Grain	71
28. Home of Helena Thiessen - British Columbia	71
29. Photo of Bernhard and Mary Fast	86

30. Lilly School Students in 1944	88
31. Picture of Lilly School #2841	88
32. Picture of Lilly Teacherage	89
33. Photo of Raymond and Helen Fast Family	90
34. Photo of Lindsay and Joan Fast Family	92
35. Photo of Dolores and David Jeffares and Family	93

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The history of the Mennonites is an unbroken record of strong faith, persecution, and the seeking of a new home, dating back to the beginning of the sixteenth century. Wherever the members settled, their labor and struggle seemed to result in fruitfulness and prosperity.

The forerunners of the Mennonites were known under the name *Anabaptists* since they rebaptized believers who had been baptized as infants. The Anabaptists originated in Zurich, Switzerland in 1525. Because of severe persecution they spread into other places where they established small fellowships and congregations. Centers of Anabaptists arose in South Germany, Austria, and Holland. The Dutch Anabaptists had their beginning in Friesland where Menno Simons was converted in 1536. Menno Simons (1496-1561) was one of the strongest and most aggressive leaders of this Reformation movement, hence the origin of this *Unique Sect* known as Mennonites is found in Holland and derives its name from Menno Simons.

As a Catholic priest, Menno tells us, "he lived the life of his class - an easy-going, care-free life assuming the burden of his office rather light-heartedly." Many of the teachings of his church seemed to cause him considerable concern. His convictions grew. Finally he began to thoroughly study the New Testament, which up to this time, he said, had been a sealed book to him.

In this brief study there is neither space nor time to mention the numerous issues on which he could not be reconciled with his church. Let it suffice to mention but four.

One day when Menno was handling the bread and wine in the celebration of a mass, the thought flashed through his mind that this bit of bread could not possibly be the flesh of Christ, as he had always been taught to believe; the wine could not possibly be the blood of Jesus. On

closer study of the Gospel, he was convinced that these elements were but symbols reminding us of Christ crucified. Menno consulted his superiors who were also forced to admit that there was no direct Scriptural authority for the practice.

Furthermore, after studying the whole New Testament, he came to the conclusion that infant baptism, too, was an error without Scriptural foundation. To him the Bible taught very clearly that only adults should be baptized and that upon confession of faith. In Holland, those who believed in adult baptism upon confession of faith were known as the *Doopsgezinde*, in Germany they were known as *Taufgesinnte*, while in Latin countries and in England the term *Anabaptists* came into common use.

A third issue on which Menno was in total disagreement with his superiors and the church in general, was that of the use of arms in time of war. His philosophy was "Peace at all cost." Among many other portions of Scripture he made reference to Matthew 5:38-39, "Ye have heard that it has been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Thus, Mennonites hold pacifism as an integral part of their philosophy.

Furthermore, Menno was convinced that the doctrine of infallibility of the Pope had no Scriptural foundation. Does the New Testament not teach us that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" and "There is not a just man upon earth and sinneth not." From this it follows then that the Pope too, is fallible.

Menno felt as well that true Christianity had to be evidenced in a person's lifestyle; it is not something that can be hid under a bushel but must be a reflection of that great Light of the world, Christ Jesus. In 1539, just three years after his conversion, he wrote: "True Evangelical faith cannot lie dormant. It clothes the naked, it feeds the hungry, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute, it serves those that hurt, it binds up that which is wounded, it has become all things to all men." This was his conviction and this he expected from his followers.

Conrad Grebel, an early leader of the Anabaptist movement, who later died a martyr's death, said, "True Christian believers do not use worldly sword or war, since all killing has ceased with them." Menno Simons added, "The regenerated do not go to war or engage in strife. They are children of peace who have beaten their swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks and know no war." In summary then, Mennonites as a religious sect had their roots in the theological beliefs of Menno Simons.

Chapter II

MENNONITES IN HOLLAND

The Mennonites in the Netherlands adjusted themselves to the culture of their country more readily than others. Much has been written about them and their history, particularly in the Dutch language. They were pioneers in the realms of agriculture, literature, art, philosophy, theology, and social and relief work. In all aspects they were known to be industrious, responsible and progressive.

Nevertheless, neither the state nor the church with which Menno had broken ties, looked with favor upon the followers of Menno Simons, now known as Mennonites. Indeed, they were persecuted and forbidden to preach their religion. The Mennonite church doors were locked and guards were stationed to prevent church entry on Sunday mornings. However, this did not prevent them from holding worship services. Many of these Dutch farmers had hedges around their yards, and Dutch Church History relates that on Sunday mornings one would find congregations holding services as they were hidden from view behind the hedges. This was so common that they came to be known as *Hedge Preachers*.

This persecution which began in 1532 increased as time went on; many ministers and strong advocates of this new religion died as martyrs and Menno himself on numerous occasions narrowly escaped execution. John Horsh in his book "The Background and Heritage of the Mennonite Church" writes that by the decade of the 1530s in the Netherlands the number of Mennonites who suffered martyrdom was about 1500. In 1539 Menno Simons wrote: "We prefer to endure misery, poverty, troubles, hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and death in our mortal bodies, and continue in the Word of the Lord, rather than to lead secure, easy lives with the world and for the sake of a short transitory life ruin our souls."

There is a rather humorous story relating one of Menno's narrow escapes. One day when he was travelling by stage coach, instead of riding inside the coach with the passengers, he was sitting outside with the driver. Suddenly they heard and saw soldiers coming. Without a word, Menno took the reins from the driver and pulled the horses to a stop. The soldiers wished to search the coach. Menno quickly jumped down and opened the door. "Is Menno Simons in here?", he called. "No, he is not in here." Menno turned to the soldiers saying "They say he is not in there, look for yourself." The soldiers rode away still searching for Menno Simons.

It is interesting that most of the Mennonite names found in Saskatchewan today are names that were found in the Flemish communities in Holland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. According to the book, "The Fate of the Prussian Mennonites" by William I. Schreiber, investigation revealed that of ten thousand Dutch Mennonites that emigrated from the Flemish communities in Holland to Prussia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there were 369 families among whom the following names predominated: Penner, Wiens, Dueck, Dyck, Classen, Klassen, Wiebe, Janzen, Jantzen, Enns, Entz, Janz, Froese, Regehr, Regier, Harder, Ewert, Pauls, Neufeld, Fast, Franz, Friesen, Reimer, Epp, Fieguth, Nickel, and Peters.

The parents of the author of this book were Fast and Epp; the parents of the author's wife were Thiessen and Bergen. Of the 369 family names listed, 157 persons were under the name Fast and 131 bore the name Epp. The names Thiessen and Bergen were listed as less common and no figures were given.

The Mennonite farmers who had reclaimed huge areas of land from the ocean by means of building dykes and pumping the water off the land with windmills, found themselves under so great political pressure and religious persecution that they looked for a country which would offer them new agricultural opportunities and religious liberty - a place where they might practise their religious faith without interference from government and church

authorities. This was the first saga in what would be many Mennonite exodus stories.

Chapter III

EMIGRATION TO PRUSSIA AND DANZIG

It is not known exactly when the first Mennonites came to Prussia but it was in the early part of the sixteenth century. Emperor Charles V decreed the extermination of Protestantism in Holland, in those days a Spanish Catholic possession. It may be assumed that among the first Protestant refugees seeking a new home in Eastern Europe there were defenseless Baptists, who were by now known as Mennonites. It was said that after 1535 not a ship called at Danzig from Holland without Baptists on board.

One of the reasons why these refugees came to Prussia was that Prussia was among the very first countries to declare itself for Protestantism. Furthermore, Prussia was in need of industrious, hardy farmers such as those who were to be found along the North Sea coast. The fleeing Protestants of Holland and Friesland were just the right people for Prussia. These people from Holland had fled their country on religious grounds, and were given refuge and protection from the executioner's axe in a Protestant area. Furthermore, the government of Prussia allotted the new emigrants 5400 hectares (13,500 acres) of land per 100 families. Many of the settlers chose to move to the alluvial lands of Danzig, reclaiming the swamps which had not yet been dyked. The authorities were willing to grant them almost unlimited personal freedom particularly in religious matters. The Mennonite settlers were allowed to maintain their own schools, and elect their preachers; they were permitted to found churches and school communities and to hold services in their native tongue.

In 1613 the question of military service was raised for the first time in the rural area of Danzig. The Mennonites strongly expressed their pacifist attitude. As a result the government passed a law by which they could pay a certain sum of money in order to be exempted from

military duty.

History also reveals the interesting fact that Mennonites established what was to be the forerunner of today's property insurance industry. In 1622 the Mennonite farmers of the Danzig area formed an agreement: all brothers in faith promised each other mutual assistance in the form of money and services should any farmer suffer property loss by fire. This custom remained in effect for 250 years until the Mennonite pioneers in Saskatchewan formed the Waisenamt (Mennonite Mutual Fire Insurance Company) in 1894, which is still in operation. It may be of interest to note that Johann Fast, grandfather of Bernhard Fast, was the first to take out such a property insurance policy from the Mennonite Mutual Fire Insurance Company. Originally the company was a group of Mennonites who agreed to share financial loss each time anyone of their members had a fire. Later a fee was assessed at the end of the year after all the claims were in, and now the members are assessed a set premium in advance. As the organization developed over the years, it changed from a volunteer church-based organization to an independent business which now employs 19 full-time and one part-time staff in the office in Waldheim, Saskatchewan. Furthermore, it now has branches in numerous centers throughout Saskatchewan.

It must be born in mind that already in the days of Frederick the Great (1740-1786) the Mennonites who had been exempted from military service possessed and had cultivated approximately 150,000 acres of land in the best district, not counting the rural area of Danzig. However, after 1786 when Frederick the Great died the Mennonite people felt their religious freedom rapidly eroding and once again they were in search of another country where liberty would be guaranteed, non-resistance tolerated, and economic expansion be made possible.

It was at this time that Catherine the Great of Russia invited the Mennonites from Prussia to colonize certain large tracts of land where they would have religious liberty, have their own schools where part of the school day could be devoted to studies of the German language

and religion, and where they would be exempt from military training and service.

Before concluding this chapter it might be well to make a few observations about their social and congregational practices. The leaders of the community, who were elected for life by all the baptized members, consisted of an Elder (Aeltester), in America called the Bishop, the admonishers or preachers, and the almoner, who was also known as the *purse carrier* or deacon. The Elder was head of a number of churches; only he could baptize and serve with communion. This arrangement was practised in most of the Mennonite churches till the middle of the twentieth century and among the most conservative congregations this practice has not been dropped to this date.

In addition to the above officials there was also a presentor, (Vorsaenger) for the Mennonites would at first not tolerate organs or other musical instruments to accompany singing in their churches. This practice, too, is adhered to up to this date by the Bergthal and Old Colony Mennonites in Saskatchewan. It is worthy of note that in 1788 at Neugarten near Danzig (Friesians) and in 1806 at Danzig (Flemings) the first church organs were introduced.

Most of the literature available to the generations that were born and raised in Danzig and Prussia was in the German language. Though the older people still communicated in the Dutch language, their children adopted the language of the country quite readily. Thus in the eighteenth century German became the language of the Mennonites, a change which did not please and was not popular with the older people who were accustomed to having their church services either in the Dutch language or in a Low-German dialect.

Chapter IV

TAKING ROOTS IN RUSSIA

Catherine's invitation to the Danzig and West Prussian Mennonites to locate on her crown lands in South Russia came at a most opportune time. The Empress who in 1762 had succeeded to the crown of all the Russias became very much interested in settling her unoccupied agricultural lands of which she had millions of acres along the Black and Caspian seas, recently won from the sultan of Turkey, with thrifty and industrious farmers.

Thus in 1788 a group of 228, mainly poor families migrated to Russia to start the Chortitzaer settlement along the Dnieper River valley. Eight villages with 15 to 30 families to a village were originally laid out with Chortitza as the centre of the settlement and the others around with such descriptive names as Rosenthal (valley of the roses), Fuerstenland (land of barons), Gruenfeld (green field) and so on. Rosenthal was the birthplace of Jacob Fast, father of Bernhard, whose mother was born at Fuerstenland.

Over a period of 60 years, nearly 10,000 Prussian Mennonites migrated to Russia. The Chortitza reservation was soon too limited in space so in 1803 they founded the Molotschna Colony, about 100 miles across the Dnieper river, south-east of Chortitza. As the Mennonite population grew, more sister colonies were provided by the Russian government. Aided by the Agricultural Commission, the colonists in both Chorititza and Molotschna as well as in the sister colonies, enjoyed a period of steady economic growth, and in course of time converted the treeless plains into flourishing fields of wheat and pastures with fine herds of cattle and flocks of sheep.

Local autonomy which was granted the Mennonite colonists included control over their schools. Each village established such schools as it pleased or none at all. Their main aim was to teach computation and communication skills together with some emphasis on religion and singing.

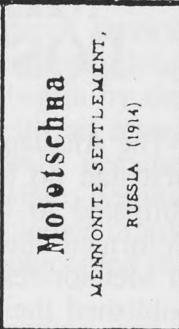
In most cases the parents were quite pleased if their children learned to read and write the German language and to do elementary problems in arithmetic. Yet even this was better than the education received by most Russian children.

However, there were always a few far-sighted individuals in every community who understood the importance of establishing higher educational standards. Among these was a group in the Molotschna settlement who in 1880 formed a school association for the purpose of founding a Vereinschule (Continuation School). The distinctive aim of the Zentralschule (Secondary School) was to provide advanced training for both the village teachers and the village and district clerks. These examples set by the Molotschna Colony were soon followed by Chortitza and sister colonies. One Zentralschule known to have higher standards than the others was located in the city of Halbstadt. It was here in Halbstadt that Jacob Fast, father of Bernhard, received his secondary education in the years 1888-1891. Many of the farmers' sons left the farms for advanced education in the fields of medicine, law, teaching, dentistry, and other professions during that era.

Such were the circumstances under which the Russian Mennonites for nearly a century enjoyed religious freedom. Their belief in non-resistance was respected, they had their own school systems, and large enough reservations for agricultural expansion as the children grew up. Then gradually history began to repeat itself and certain privileges were either withdrawn or given in exchange for economic concessions. For example, if a young man preferred not to take military training, he could pay the government the amount of tax that it would cost to pay for one soldier. The forestry service which was offered the Mennonite young men in lieu of actual army duty was inaugurated in 1880. According to government regulations this work was to consist of planting and cultivating forests on the steppes of South Russia and the term of service was to be four years. The government was to pay each forester twenty kopeks, equivalent to ten cents Canadian,

each working day, and furnish the working tools and implements. For some years the average number of foresters remained about 400, at an average costs of approximately 70,000 rubles to be paid by the church.

By now with the growing importance of such non-religious problems as forestry, schools, preservation of the German language and other questions political in nature, the need for a more compact working organization and closer cooperation among the various congregations became evident. With this in mind the General Conference of Mennonite Congregations in Russia was founded November 17, 1881, at Halbstadt. These conferences were attended by elders, ministers, and lay delegates. The first sessions dealt with such items as forestry service, the establishment of a theological seminary, and a conference periodical. The motto of the conference was: Unity in essentials, tolerance in non-essentials, and charity in all things. The more conservative Mennonites did not join the General Conference. In the province of Saskatchewan the conservative groups are known as the Bergthalers and the Old Colony Mennonites. They refused to compromise and as early as 1870 laid plans to leave Russia. Both Canada and the United States of America were in need of settlers and especially of good farmers. Both governments invited the Russian Mennonites to emigrate, promising them the freedoms that they wanted and granting to each adult male a quarter section (160 acres) of land with the option to buy more at three dollars an acre. This offer was too good to pass up; it was accepted and the movement of Mennonites was once again on its way.



Chapter V

MENNONITE MUSIC LOST AND REGAINED

The Anabaptists, who became known as Mennonites, at first had no hymn books of their own, hence they were obligated to borrow German hymnals from neighboring Reformed churches. However, by the time the migration of Mennonites to Russia began, the Polish Mennonites had published their own German hymnal and it was this book that accompanied them to their new home in Russia. These hymnals were without musical notation and furthermore, the members of the early settlers in Russia had neither the degree of intellectual sophistication nor the required amount of wealth and free time to develop a musical civilization of any complexity.

Having no musical notations with the hymnals, the *Vorsaenger* (presentors) or song leaders were charged with the responsibility of remembering and preserving the melodies and leading the congregations in their singing. It stands to reason that the melodies underwent many changes as years went by. Indeed, by 1789 the musical life of the Mennonite churches in Russia had deteriorated considerably. The most conservative Mennonites (Old Colony) continued to use these hymnals without musical notation and were led by *Vorsaenger* in their congregational singing. The author of this book recalls attending such a worship service on two occasions in 1930. The hymns could have as many as fifteen or more stanzas; the singing of each stanza required approximately three minutes, so that the duration of a song might be three-quarters of an hour. One such hymn was sung at the beginning of the service and one for the closing.

George Wiebe, a noted authority on music, in the book, "Mennonites in Russia," printed in 1989, says, "The singing in conservative Canadian congregations in which this tradition has been perpetuated was characterized by a

nasal, penetrating tone and a slow tempo necessary to accommodate the many ornamental notes that had been added gradually to the hymn tunes." Jacob Klassen recalls his memories as a seven-year-old boy, of a church service in the Bergthal colony in 1854 and wrote: "endlessly long hymns from the Gesangbuch (hymnal) were begun by the Vorsaenger of the congregation and sung with so many flourishes and embellishments that the melody became completely unrecognizable, and it was impossible, despite my good ear, to retain any of these strange melodies in my memory." A sample page of that book is photocopied on page 17.

This tradition of unaccompanied unison singing using hymnals without musical notation was, by the Old Colony Mennonites, carried on until very recently and in some congregations is being used at this time. However, the wealthier and better educated colonists of Molotschna Colony and especially in the village of Gnadenfeld, the musical reform took place in the early part of the nineteenth century.

In 1835 a young Prussian Mennonite school teacher, Heinrich Franz, came to teach in Gnadenfeld. He loved singing and wanted his students to enjoy it as well. Since in Franz's opinion the art of singing had lost most of its beauty, clarity, and correctness, he was determined to rectify this by writing Ziffern or numbers to bring the hymns back to their original melodies. He wrote the manuscript in Ziffern in 1837 but his first edition, which was in unison singing, was not published until 23 years later (1860). His second edition, published in 1880 was in four-part harmony. A sample page of his second edition of the Choralbuch, published in Leipzig, is found on page 18.

Singing hymns from the Gesangbuch according to Ziffern soon became a regular part of the curriculum in Mennonite schools. It stands to reason that before long these melodies were introduced to the church services by the younger generation. Almost any innovation in a congregation is viewed with suspicion and this was no exception. However, before the turn of the century, both

the Mennonite Brethren and the Conference Mennonites had accepted the new music, held choral conductors' workshops, and began to sing songs in the gospel hymn style.

In the year 1890 the *Gesangbuch mit Noten* (hymnal with notes) was published in Berne, Indiana, United States of America. The Conference Mennonite immigrants of the 1890s lost no time in making use of this book during their Sunday morning Worship service. A sample to be found on page 19 is taken from the *Gesangbuch mit Noten* purchased by Jacob Fast, father of Bernhard, soon after their arrival in Rosthern, Saskatchewan.

Before long Folk music, Gospel songs, and the more sophisticated music was all written with notated music. In the field of music, as in most other areas of culture and learning, the Mennonites were very progressive, so that at the present time their congregational singing, their church choirs, school choirs, and so on, compare most favorably with the best music and singing in our land.

zagt, Gott will ich lassen sorgen, dem ich mich zugesagt. Es koste Leib und Leben und Alles was ich hab': an dir will ich fest kleben und nimmer lassen ab.

13. Die Welt, die mag zerbrechen, du stehst mir ewiglich; kein Brennen, Häuen, Stechen soll trennen mich und dich; kein Hunger und kein Dürsten, kein' Armuth, keine Pein, kein Zorn des großen Fürsten soll mir ein' Hind' rung sein.

14. Kein Engel, keine Freuden, kein Thron, kein Herrlichkeit, kein Lieben und kein Leiden, kein' Angst und Fährlichkeit; was man nur kann erdenken, es sei klein oder groß, der keines soll mich lenken aus deinem Arm und Schooß.

15. Mein Herze geht in Sprüngen und kann nicht traurig sein, ist voller Freud' und Singen, sieht lauter Sonnenschein. Die Sonne, die mir lachet, ist mein Herr Jesus Christ; das, was mich singend machet, ist, was im Himmel ist.

337 Jes. 8. 9. 10. Seid böse ihr Völker und gebet doch die Flucht — — denn hier ist Immanuel.

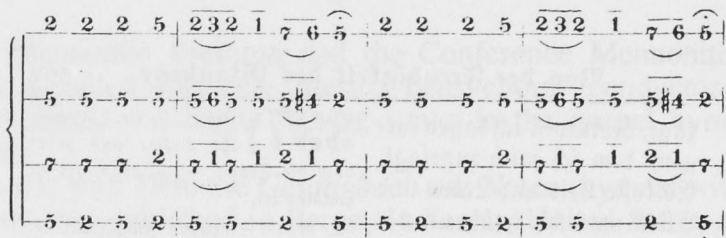
85. Mel.: Schönster Immanuel 2c.

Schönster Immanuel! Herzog der Frommen, du, meiner Seelen Trost! komm, komm nur bald, du hast mir, höchster Schatz, mein Herz genommen, so ganz vor Liebe brennt und nach dir wall't. Nichts kann auf Erden mir Lieber's werden, als wenn ich meinen Jesum stets behalt'.

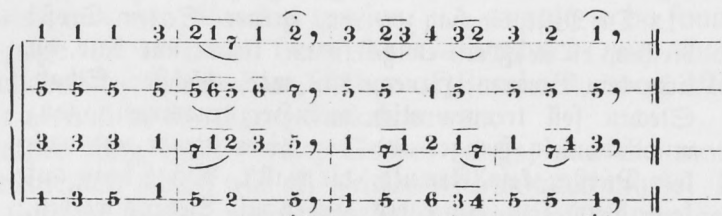
2. Dein Nam' ist zuckersüß, Honig im Munde, holdselig, lieblich, frisch, wie kühler Thau, der Feld und Blumen nekt zur Morgenstunde. Mein Jesus ist es nur, dem ich vertrau'; dann weicht vom Herzen, was mir macht Schmerzen, wenn ich im Glauben ihn anbet' und schau'.

3. Ob mich das Kreuze gleich hier zeitlich plaget, wie es bei Christen oft pflegt zu geschehn, wenn meine Seele nur nach Jesu fraget, so kann das Herze schon auf Rosen gehn. Kein Ungewitter ist mir zu bitter, mit Jesu

The above is a page out of the 980 page Gesangbuch (hymnal) printed in Odessa in 1859. This book was purchased at that time by Johann Bergen, grandfather of Mary (Thiessen) Fast.



Drin es, un-ter Noth und Pla-gen, Un-ter Bit-tern, Angst und Ba-gen,



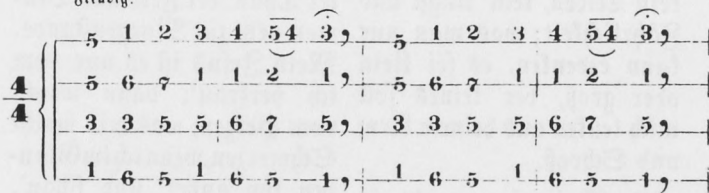
Sich am Kreuz zu Tod' ge-blut't, Uns und al-ler Welt zu gut.

Bu 7, 7, 8, 8, 7, 7 Eilben.

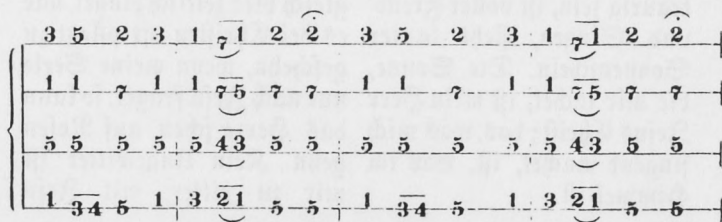
40. Weil ich Jesu Schäflein bin.

G dur, a = 2.

Freudig.



Weil ich Je-su Schäf-lein bin, Freu' ich mich nur im-mer hin

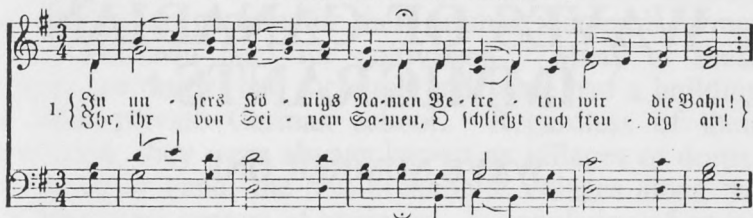


Ü-ber mei-nen gu-ten Hir-ten, Der mich wohl weiß zu be-wir-then,

Four part music by Ziffern. This is Heinrich Franz's second edition published in 1880.

353.

Pſ. 20, 6. Im Namen unser's Gottes werfen wir Panter auf.



1. { Im un - ser's Kö - nig's Na - men Be - tre - ten wir die Bahn! }
 { Ihr, ihr von Sei - nem Sa - men, O schließt euch freu - dig an! }



Wir zieh'n zum Frie - dens - lan - de, Ein Leib, Ein Herz, Ein Geist. Wohl



dem, der al - le Pan - de Voll Hel - den - muth zer - reißt.

2 Der Weg ist schmal, doch eben,
 Und führt zur Seligkeit;
 Die Straße dort daneben
 Ist zwar bequem und breit;
 Doch wer sie geht, muß sterben,
 An ihrem Ende droht
 Ein ewiges Verderben,
 Fluch, Zorn und Qual und Tod.

3 Wir folgen Deinem Loden,
 Du ewig treuer Freund!
 Wer könnte sich verstoßen?
 Du haßt's so gut gemeint.
 Wir wandern abgeschieden,
 Und Jeder trägt sein Kreuz
 Ergeben und zufrieden;
 Für Pilger hat es Reiz.

4 So wandeln wir entschlossen
 Dem Himmelsführer nach
 Und dulden unverdrossen
 Und tragen Seine Schmach,
 Und steh'n im finstern Thale:
 O Jesu, steh' uns bei
 Und mach' im Hochzeitsfeste
 Bald Alles, Alles neu!

5 Hinan! hinan! ihr Frommen!
 Es koste Schweiß und Blut!
 Hinan! hinan gekommen
 Mit wahren Heldenmuth!
 Bald hebt uns unser Sehnen
 Hoch über Tod und Grab;
 Bald trocknet uns're Thränen
 Die Hand der Liebe ab.

Joh. Ludw. Bröder.

Gesangbuch mit Noten
 Purchased by Jacob Fast in the 1890s

Chapter VI

WAVES OF CANADIAN IMMIGRANTS

WAVE NUMBER ONE

The years 1873-1876 witnessed the exodus of between 17,000 and 18,000 people or about one-third of the total Mennonite population of South Russia (Ukraine) to North America. Some came in search of religious utopia, where they could live in peace and humility but most came for economic reasons and wanted land. The Canadian Government loaned them \$800.00 per family to help pay their passage and establish them in farming.

A few years after this group settled in Manitoba, the provincial Department of Education passed legislation that public schools be established among them, that instruction be mainly in the English language and that the course of studies as outlined by the Department of Education be adhered to. This the colonists stubbornly resisted, but without success. The more conservative members of this conservative group then, in 1895 pulled up stakes and moved to the North-West-Territories (Saskatchewan). The establishment of the Hague-Osler-Warman Reserve in Saskatchewan provided another refuge for the group.

The Canadian Government reserved the even-numbered sections of four townships in the Hague-Osler area, which lay along the railway line between Saskatoon and Rosthern for the Old Colony Mennonite settlement. The odd-numbered sections had to be purchased from the railway company. Three years later another township was granted under the same terms. By 1905 fourteen villages had been established, with the same names as the villages they had left in Manitoba.

These villages, it should be noted, are not to be confused with the villages and towns that sprung up along the rail lines with a Railroad Station as its center. The Mennonite

villages usually had one main street with farmyards adjoining each other built on either side. These farmers had a common pasture for their animals but each farmer owned his own land for cultivation. Many of these villages, or dorps, had a church and some had a building for their private German school. Regardless of their population, they were always known as villages or dorps. On the other hand, the non-Mennonite villages along the rail lines were centers of business. A population of under 100 was considered a hamlet, over 100 a village, over 500 was called a town, and over 5000 received city status.

The first two conservative Mennonite churches organized under one Elder or Bishop, were located in the village of Neuanlage, south of Hague, and in the village of Neuhorst near Osler. They elected one lay minister and one deacon for each congregation. In 1913 the Bergthal Mennonites built a church near the village of Schoenwiese, near Osler.

Since the Saskatchewan Department of Education did not compel them to attend public schools, their private school teachers were almost invariably landless or farmers who, during the winter months would open their homes to children in the neighborhood and would instruct them in the four Rs - reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion. Instruction was given in Low German but the reading, which was mainly Fiebel, Catechism and Bible, was done in High German.

RULES FOR TEACHERS

1872

1. *Teachers each day will fill lamps, clean chimneys.*
2. *Each teacher will bring a bucket of water and a scuttle of coal for the day's session.*
3. *Make your pens carefully. You may whittle nibs to the individual taste of the pupils.*
4. *Men teachers may take one evening each week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they go*

to church regularly.

5. *After ten hours in school, the teachers may spend the remaining time reading the Bible or other good books.*
6. *Women teachers who marry or engage in unseemly conduct will be dismissed.*
7. *Every teacher should lay aside from each pay a goodly sum of his earnings for his benefit during his declining years so that he will not become a burden on society.*
8. *Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber shop will give good reason to suspect his worth, intention, integrity and honesty.*
9. *The teacher who performs his labor faithfully and without fault for five years will be given an increase of twenty-five cents per week in his pay, providing the Board of Education approves.*

Compliments of the printery at the Mennonite Village Museum, Steinbach, Manitoba.

By the mid 1920s the Saskatchewan government passed legislation that all must organize into Public School Districts, schools must be built and qualified teachers hired to instruct according to the prescribed curriculum. Thus we find schools being built throughout the area originally reserved for the Bergthal and Old Colony Mennonites. The most conservative members of their group sold their land and planned their treks to South America and Mexico in order to avoid compulsory education for their children. In 1922 alone, some 6000 Mennonites from Manitoba and Saskatchewan made the move to Mexico, settling in the northern state of Chihuahua and farther south in the state of Durango. In addition to this move there was an exodus of many more thousands to the Paraguayan Chaco and to

Bolivia, South America and to Belize during the mid 1920s and mid 1940s. Fortunately, this coincided with the time when a third Wave of Mennonites arrived from Russia looking for land. Consequently many of the third Wave immigrants purchased land and settled in the Hague-Osler-Warman area.

In the June 1990 edition of the *Mennonite Historian* Menno Kroeher reports that about 25,000 Kanadier Mennonites returned to the land (Canada) which their parents and grandparents left some 68 years earlier.

It must be said that the returning Mennonites have shown tremendous resourcefulness in making the required adjustments, such as learning the English language, finding employment and adjusting to new school and church situations. Indeed, among this group are today many of the prominent educators, doctors, lawyers, as well as members of numerous other professions and occupations.

WAVE NUMBER TWO

The Fast and Epp families were among those who were prepared to make concessions and remain in Russia temporarily. However, within the next two decades more and more of the privileges enjoyed by our people began to be taken from them, so that many of the more liberal-minded also decided to seek greener pastures in North America. Their passports indicate that the Epps crossed the Atlantic in 1891; the Fast left Russia in March 1892. The first winter in Canada was spent in Manitoba with friends who had settled there two decades earlier.

One of their main concerns during the winter in Manitoba was the schooling of their children. Jacob Fast, father of Bernhard, who had graduated from a Pedagogical Institute (Teachers' Training) in the German and Russian languages in Halbstadt, Russia, just prior to leaving that country, was the logical person to take charge of the education of the children. Though teaching was his first love, due to the language problem in the new country, he was ultimately compelled to settle for farming as a vocation.

Born in Russia in 1863, a man by the name of Gerhard Ens had emigrated to Canada in 1891, the first in a new Wave of about 900 people to arrive in the 1890s. It is this Wave of 900 which included the Fasts and Epps, parents and grandparents of Bernhard Fast, "Old and New Furrows: The Story of Rosthern" related that Gerhard Ens not only took up a homestead but also opened up the first store and was appointed the village's first postmaster in 1893; both the store and the Post Office were located in a boxcar loaned to him by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. The Rosthern history book also quotes a Johann Andres recalling, "There was not much mail in those days; when the train arrived with the mail local inhabitants gathered in the store, Mr. Ens, standing on a box at the counter, drew the mail from the bag and called out the name of the addressee who answered to his name and received the mail."

This part of Canada which had heretofore been known as the Saskatchewan District of the North-West Territories, was organized as the province of Saskatchewan in 1905. Gerhard Ens, who had long been active and interested in politics became an elected member of the first Saskatchewan Legislature.

By 1905 when the population of the incorporated town of Rosthern was still less than 1000, Saskatoon's population was 3000, and Saskatchewan boasted 23,000 people. There were no fewer than eight grain elevators in Rosthern, making the town one of the largest grain shipping centers in the province. Most of that grain was grown by the newly settled Mennonites in the area.

As previously mentioned, the Fasts emigrated from Russia in March 1892 and spent the first winter with friends in Manitoba. Their plan was to continue their trek to Saskatchewan the following year. One day in the spring of 1893 Gerhard Ens announced to the people of Rosthern and the surrounding area that a large number of Russian emigrants were to arrive on the evening train. Crowds of people awaited the event, and as the train came to a halt, the passengers were met by a host of friends who had left their homeland a year or two earlier. Among the

passengers was Johann Fast, grandfather of Bernhard, commonly known as *Der Riese* (the giant) a man of giant stature weighing 385 pounds in his prime. Johann Fast was closely followed by his wife Maria nee Krahn and their eight sons: Johann, Jacob, Cornelius, Heinrich, Peter, Isaac, Gerhard, and Alexander, ranging in ages from twenty-one to three years.

The Heinrich Epps, grandparents of Bernhard Fast, had arrived at Rosthern the previous year and had already taken up homestead in the area where the town of Waldheim is today. With Heinrich Epp was his wife Margaretha nee Rempel, and their children: Maria, Helena, (Mrs. Jacob Fast) Margaretha, Katherina, Heinrich, Peter, and Jacob. Three more children: David, Agatha, and Johann were born to the family after settling in Canada.

In Saskatchewan the earliest center of activity of the Conference Mennonites (Wave number Two) was in the Saskatchewan Valley, an area between the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers where the towns of Rosthern, Laird, Carlton, Waldheim, Hepburn, Mennon, Dalmeny, Osler, and Hague are today located.

WAVE NUMBER THREE

For the next quarter of a century all seemed to go very well for those Mennonites who had opted to remain in Russia. The emigration from Russia had nearly run its course for the time being, probably because the times were good for the Mennonites in Russia and most of them did not see the dark clouds on the political horizon in spite of revolutionary ferment everywhere.

Generally they increased the size of their farms, more sister reservations were granted, villages mushroomed, and most of the farmers became quite wealthy. They were glad that they had not, like so many of their friends and relatives, left for Canada when they could live in peace and prosperity in the country they loved.

As time went on the younger generation shifted from rural to urban centers. They had their own implement

factories, flour mills, and so on. Nearly every village had its own craftsmen, they grew their own wool which they wove into cloth, and designed their own clothes. Other small industries embraced vinegar factories, brick yards, breweries, cheese factories, and the like. Culturally, the Mennonites were only slightly influenced by their Russian environment. They retained their German customs and Mennonite traditions to the end. Most of the older people spoke Russian with difficulty.

Improvements of the school system kept pace during this period with progress in other fields in spite of government interference, largely, however, in what might be called secondary education. In every colony there was likely to be a Zentralschule (high school), the chief aim being to train teachers for elementary schools. There were two Teachers' Colleges, one at Halbstadt and one at Chortitza. During the period from 1885 to 1915 their vision resulted in the founding of at least ten institutions such as Grossweide Orphanage in the Molotschna Colony, the Maria School for the Deaf, the Psychiatric Institute Bethania, a number of Bible schools, and others. A few hundred young people attended non-Mennonite higher institutions of learning in Russia and about 50 attended seminaries, universities, and Bible schools in Germany and Switzerland.

In conclusion, it is quite evident that by 1914, the outbreak of World War I, the Mennonites of South Russia enjoyed not only a degree of material prosperity, but also a state of culture far above the level of their Russian neighbors.

WORLD WAR I, 1914-1918 AND AFTER

When World War I broke out in 1914 Mennonite exemption from military service was a source of envy on the part of their Russian neighbors. Speaking the German language, they were suspected and openly accused of German sympathies by the Russians. The Mennonite men were still permitted to render alternate services which included forestry, being attached to the sanitary

department, forming complete hospital units including stretcher bearers who gathered the wounded on the battlefields, and hospital trains transporting the wounded to the hospitals.

As the war continued, anti-German legislation was passed. Anyone speaking German was considered an enemy. However, churches were still allowed to hold services in the German language. The most vicious of these anti-German regulations was the decree in 1915 ordering all the German colonists to sell their land equities within a year. Where this could not be done the government sold the land for shamefully low prices and gave the former owner the price in twenty-five-year bonds of doubtful value.

Things continued to get from bad to worse. Soon nearly every village was visited by raiders, opposing armies and robbers. Thousands of people were robbed of everything they had - pigs, horses, grain, chickens, money - and then tortured without end. Hundreds of men and women were killed outright.

In *Time of Terror in Russia* by Waldemar Janzen, professor at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, the author says, "What do we choose to pass on to our children from that history? This question becomes particularly acute when we come to the year 1917. A purely factual report contains an excess of destruction and suffering: revolution, typhoid, dispossession, famine, disenfranchisement, closing of churches, loss of independence, arrest, trials, concentration camps, exile, separated families, treks of refugees to Germany and forced repatriation. Russian soldiers forced men to dig their own graves, then shot and buried them. This horror is part of our history and must be told. All organized Mennonite life was completely paralysed."

It was under these circumstances that the song *Wehrlos und Verlassen* became most meaningful and, indeed, was the theme song of those who suffered the above mentioned trials and tribulations. This song is reproduced on pages 31 and 32, first in the original and then in the English translation by the author of this book. They were

determined to leave Russia at all cost if only possible. But where were they to go? The war was over. The Canadian government remembered the excellent farmers that had come over during the previous two Waves and was quite prepared to welcome more of the same. The Canadian Pacific Railway still had vast stretches of sparsely settled prairie land in need of thrifty settlers.

The newly formed Canadian Board of Colonization under the presidency of the Reverend David Toews, Rosthern, Saskatchewan, and other church leaders had numerous meetings with government officials and with the Prime Minister, The Right Honourable William Lyon Mackenzie King himself. Finally an agreement was reached whereby the emigrants from Russia would be accepted with the same privileges granted to the members of the first two Waves. The Canadian Pacific Railway agreed to transport these Mennonites to Canada on credit, with only the assurance of the Canadian Board of Colonization (C.B.C.), that the Railway company would be finally reimbursed for their outlay as security.

According to records in the *Nordheimer Mennonite Church of Saskatchewan 1925-1975* the transportation charges from Europe to Canada for the immigrants of 1923 were to be as follows:

- From the Lettland border to the seaport Libau	\$ 7.00
- Visa and expenses of the deterred immigrants	11.00
- From Libau to Quebec (ocean)	118.50
- From Quebec to Winnipeg (rail)	25.00
- Fee for the immigration work	3.00
- Meals	2.50
Total for an adult	\$167.00

Ocean and rail fares were half price for children under twelve years of age.

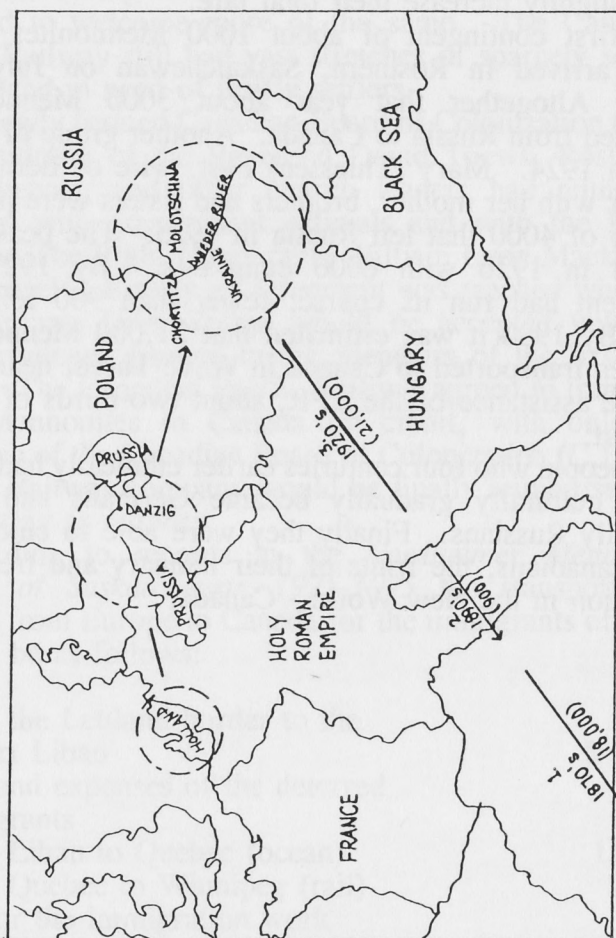
Since the Mennonites in Russia were located over an area covering a few thousand miles, their transportation charges would vary somewhat. Furthermore, the above

list of expenses only covered the transportation to Winnipeg, Manitoba where many disembarked. However, the majority continued to Rosthern, Saskatchewan which would slightly increase their total fare.

The first contingent of about 1000 Mennonites from Russia arrived in Rosthern, Saskatchewan on July 21, 1923. Altogether that year about 3000 Mennonites emigrated from Russia to Canada. Another group of 4000 came in 1924. Mary (Thiessen) Fast, wife of Bernhard, together with her mother, brothers and sisters were part of a group of 4000 that left Russia in 1925. The peak was reached in 1926 with 6000 emigrants. By 1927 the movement had run its course; fewer than 900 left that year. By 1930 it was estimated that 21,000 Mennonites had been transported to Canada in Wave Three, nearly all with the assistance of the CPR, about two-thirds of them on credit.

The people who four centuries earlier ethnically had been Dutch, culturally gradually became Germans and then politically Russians. Finally they were able to enjoy, as good Canadians, the fruits of their industry and freedom of religion in the New World - Canada.

EUROPE in 1763



The Three Waves of Emigrants to Canada

CANADA

Wehrlos und verlassen

GLAUBE UND RECHTIFERTIGUNG

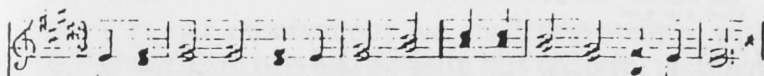
Wehrlos und verlassen

Er wird dich mit seinen Fittichen decken, und deine Zuversicht wird sein unter seinen Flügeln,
Seine Wahrheit ist Schutz und Schild. Ps. 91, 4.

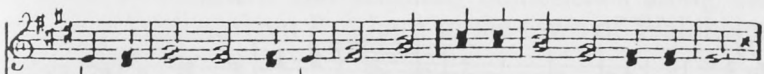
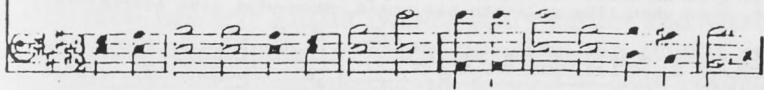
A. T. A. T. mit Refrain.

Mary Hagworths (umg. geh. 1819-1883)
Übers. Carl Rohlf

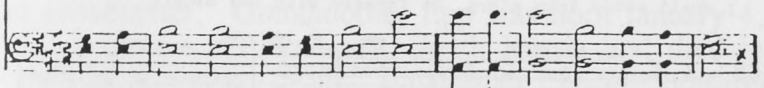
W. W. Bentley



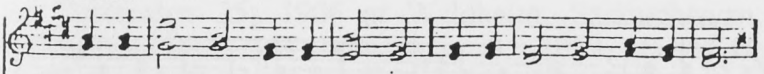
1. Wehr-los und ver-las-sen schnt sich oft mein Herz nach stil-ler Ruh;
2. Drückt mich Kun-mer, Müß und Sor-geo, mel-ne Zu-flucht bist nur Du,
3. Si-cher bin ich und ge-bor-gen, denn bei Dir ist sü-ße Ruh;
4. Kommt dann mel-ne letz-te Stun-de, geh' ich ein zur ew'-gen Ruh;



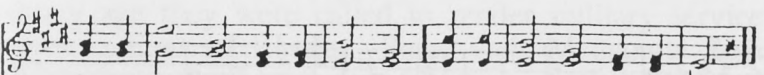
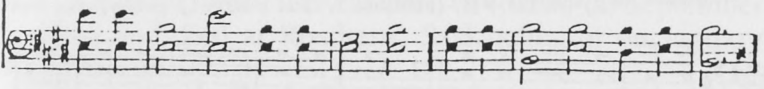
doch Du dek-kest mit dem Fit-tich Dei-ner Lie-be sanft mich zu.
Ret-test mich aus al-len Äng-sten, trö-stest mich und deckst mich zu.
mag es auch im Le-ben stür-men, Herr, Dein Fit-tich deckt mich zu,
und Du deckst mit Dei-nen Flü-geln e-wig-lich dein Kind-lein zu.



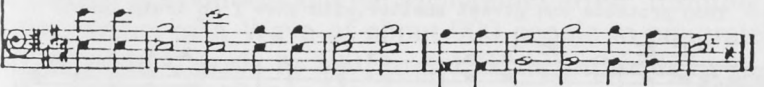
REFRAIN:



Un-ter Dei-nem sanf-ten Fit-tich Änd'ich Frie-den, Trost und Ruh;



denn Du schir-mest mich so freund-lich, schüt-zest mich und deckst mich zu.



Wehrlos und verlassen

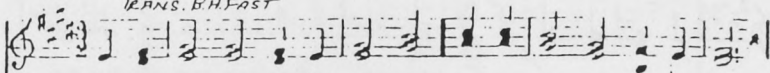
Er wird dich mit seinen Fittichen decken, und deine Zuversicht wird sein unter seinen Flügeln.
Sein Wahrheit ist Schutz und Schild. Ps. 91, 4.

♩ 7 ♩ 7 mit Refrain.

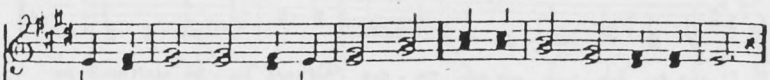
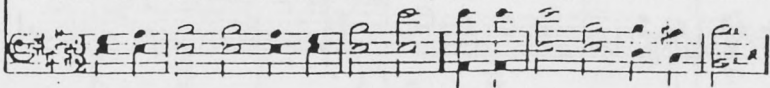
Mary Dagsworthy-Lamoy geb. Yard, 1810-1863
Chor. Carl Kobl

W. W. Bentley

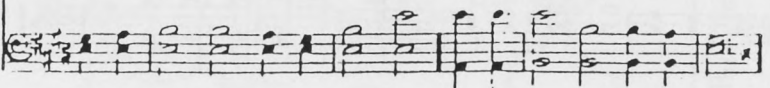
TRANS. R.H. EAST



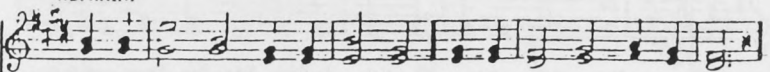
1. Inoffensive and neglected yearns my heart for sweet repose;
2. When distressed, in grief and trouble, I find refuge but in Thee;
3. I am safe and out of harm's way, for in Thee I've sweet repose;
4. Then when life on earth has ended, Thou wilt give eternal rest;



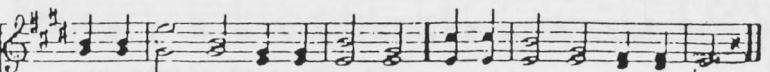
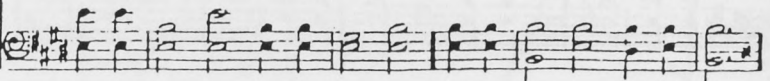
With the pinion of Thy love, Thou holdest me 'til eyelids close.
Thou redeemest me in anguish and dost comfort even me.
When the storms of life surround me Lord, console and hold me close.
I shall enter into glory, be forever with the blest.



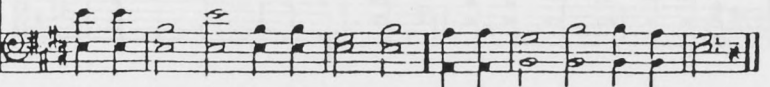
REFRAIN:



Under Thee and Thy soft pinions I find comfort, peace, and rest;



Thou protects and givest shelter, with Thee I am truly blest.



Chapter VII

PIONEERS OF THE 1890s

OUR FOREBEARS ARRIVE

Though in our observations we shall deal mainly with the families of the Fast and Epp in this chapter, the story is really very similar for all the 900 emigrants from Russia during Wave Two. Both families made a stop-over in Manitoba where they were greeted and accommodated by friends who had left Russia twenty years earlier and were already well established. After spending the winter in Manitoba they continued westward, landed at what is now the town of Rosthern and acquired homesteads along the main road leading from Rosthern to the town of Waldheim and beyond.

Since the author of this brief history is a grandson of Heinrich and Margaretha Epp and of Johann and Maria Fast, they will frequently be referred to as grandmother and grandfather. Grandmother Epp was born January 4, 1857, grew up in Osterwick, South Russia and died in Waldheim in August 1937. Grandfather Epp was born on March 13, 1855, raised at Fuerstenland, South Russia and died September 25, 1906 at Waldheim, Saskatchewan. Grandfather Fast was born June 8, 1852, raised in Rosenthal, Russia and died at Laird, Saskatchewan in 1919. Grandmother Fast was born in Russia on September 15, 1848 and died at Rosthern, Saskatchewan on January 23, 1916.

As the sons of the Epp and Fast families reached military age they were called to render military service under the Czar of Russia. Since their Mennonite faith forbade them to join the armed forces, conflicts between the Czarist government and the Mennonites arose, resulting in the exodus of a Wave of about 900 people to emigrate and arrive in Canada in 1891 and 1892 respectively.



Johann and Maria Fast

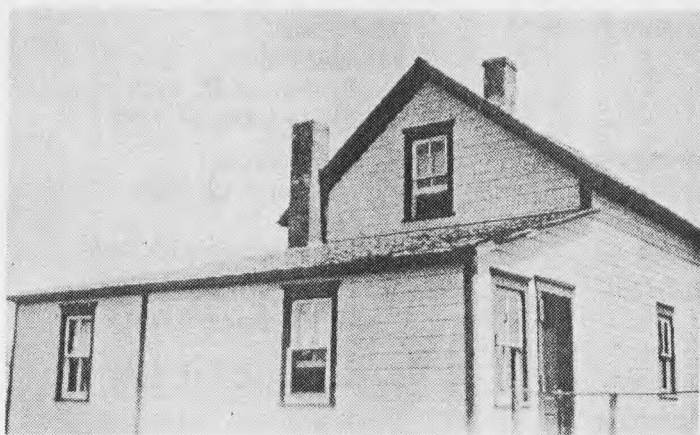


Heinrich and Margaretha Epp

The above pictures are the paternal and maternal grandparents of Bernhard Fast.



**Jacob and Helena Fast
Parents of Bernhard**

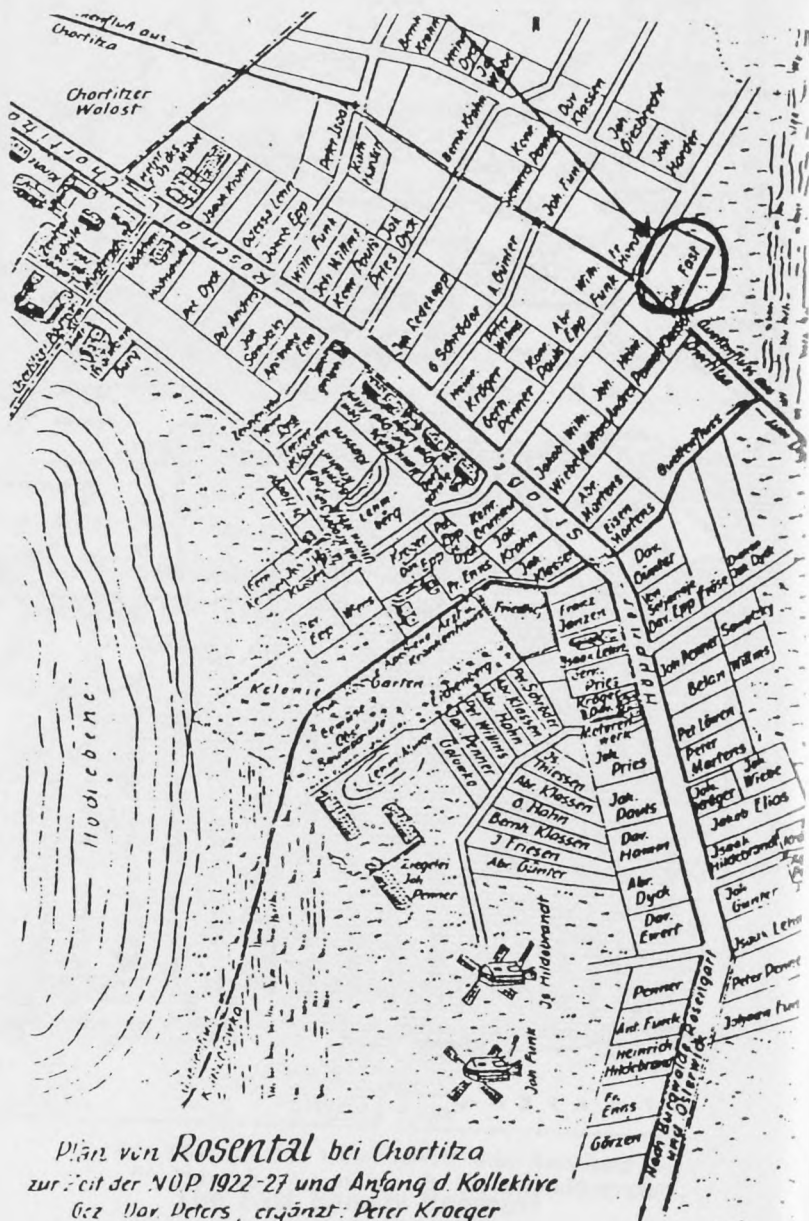


Birthplace of Bernhard Fast

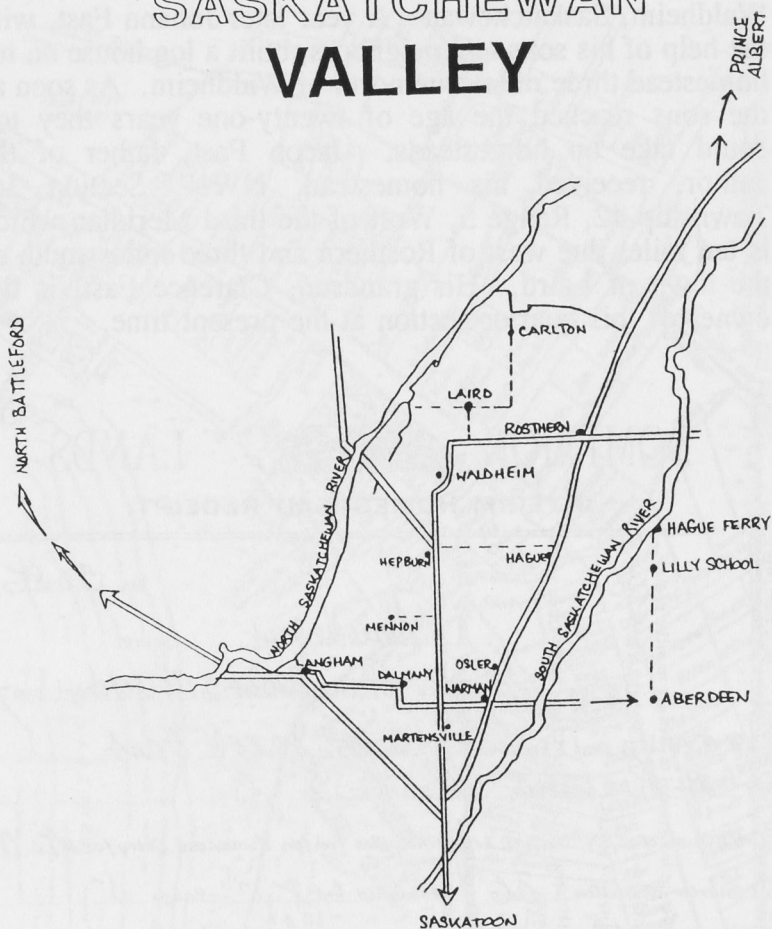
[illegible]

37

Birthplace of Jacob Fast



SASKATCHEWAN VALLEY



A homestead consisted of one quarter section of land (160 acres). The applicant was required to pay a ten dollar registration fee and to live on his homestead for the greater part of the year for a three-year period. It was also stipulated that he break up a minimum of ten acres a year for three successive years - 30 acres in total. Furthermore, during these three years he was to build a dwelling place (a long cabin sufficed), a shed to hold grain, and a shelter for at least a team of horses and several head of cattle. If there were no water supply, he was required to dig a well. Most of the young men were ambitious enough to go far beyond the minimum requirements. When these stipulations were met the homesteader would receive his deed or title for the said 160 acres. Furthermore, each homesteader had the option of buying another quarter section adjacent to his own at three dollars an acre. Many who were financially able took advantage of this offer. Since only the even-numbered sections were granted as homesteads and the odd-numbered ones had to be purchased from the Railroad company, there was plenty of unbroken prairie. On this untamed prairie grew luscious grass called *prairie wool* which the farmers could mow and haul home for winter feed at one dollar per ton and they could be certain that no inspector would ever check on the size of their loads.

Because of the abundance of the dry prairie wool there were frequent prairie fires which destroyed everything in their paths during the hot summer days. As a result, the fire insurance company made it compulsory for every farmer to plough a fire guard approximately three yards wide and about 50 yards from the buildings. Every boy was instructed that in case of a prairie fire, whether riding horseback or driving a team, he must blindfold the horses and ride through it rather than try to flee from it.

Grandfather Johann Fast not only homesteaded, but managed to buy another quarter section of land at three dollars per acre adjacent to his homestead. Due to his excessive weight he found physical labor extremely difficult. After somewhat more than a decade of farming, he with his wife, Maria, and their younger sons moved to

Rosthern where he retired.

On December 14, 1897, the author's parents, Jacob Fast and Helena Epp were married. Their building program was not quite completed by that date so they were obliged to live with his parents for a brief period of time before settling in their own home. Their furniture consisted of apple boxes as seats and boards attached to the log walls which served as shelves and cabinets. The walls were white-washed and nails driven into them served the part of our present day clothes closets. Poplar wood, of which there was an abundance, was their main source of heating fuel. It stands to reason that with little or no insulation in the walls the temperature indoors fluctuated from below zero to extreme heat during the winter months. A kerosene lamp was generally the sole source of light by which to knit, play games, mend harness and read during the long winter nights, while the children played about in the checkered shades.

During the summer of 1898 Jacob Fast, father of the author, with the loan of a yoke of oxen from his father, a team of horses of his own and a single-share hand plough, managed to break his first ten acres of sod. Thus in the year 1901 he received the clear title for his first 160 acres of land. Some years later he was able to purchase a second and then a third quarter section. Though oxen were used as beasts of burden by some pioneers for several years to come, almost every farmer purchased a team of horses for road travel. The twenty-five to thirty mile round trip to Rosthern to buy provisions, pick up mail, or haul grain to the elevator or to the mill to be ground into flour, usually required two full days. Therefore, it was common for a few neighbors to travel in company.

Besides the plough, implements commonly used were: a harrow, a seeder, a grass mower, a rake, and for harvesting each farmer had a binder pulled by three or four horses depending on whether it was a six-foot or an eight-foot binder. Usually about one farmer in eight or ten had a threshing machine; he would do the custom grain threshing for the rest of the neighbors.

Telephones were few and far between, radio and

television to inform these early pioneers of daily world affairs had not yet been invented. The author recalls his father reading three weekly German papers, *Der Wahrheitsfreund*, published by the General Conference of Mennonites, *Die Rundschau* a Mennonite Brethren paper, and *Der Courier*, a secular paper. Articles which father considered of particular interest and meaningful to the family, he would read aloud while mother and the children dropped their activities and listened.

FORM H.

This Certificate is not valid unless countersigned by the Commissioner of Dominion Lands, or a Member of the Dominion Lands Board.

Certificate of Recommendation for Homestead Patent.

1901

Department of the Interior,

Dominion Lands Office,

PRINCE ALBERT, 14 June 1901

I Certify that *Mr Jacob Fahl-*

who is the holder of a Homestead Entry for *N.W. 14*

of Section Number *36* Township *42* Range *5*

N. of the *3rd* Meridian, has complied with the provisions of the law required to be conformed to, in order to entitle him to receive a patent for such Homestead, and that I have recommended the issue of such patent.

Countersigned at Ottawa, this *2nd* day of *July* 1901.

J. G. Burdick

Commissioner of Dominion Lands.

James Fahl
Agent.

Jacob Fast with his wife Helena and their children who were still single, lived on their homestead until the time of his death on August 4, 1939. The first three of their fifteen children were born in the log cabin. By that time they could afford to build a house with lumber in which the rest of the children were born. Of the fifteen children, one died in infancy, one died at the age of four years, and thirteen lived to adulthood. At the time of this writing (1991) two sons and three daughters are still living. Three of the daughters: Helen, Mary, and Olga married farmers, Margrete married a salesman, and Dora served as a clerk and cashier in a retail business. Two of the sons: John and Erwin became farmers, Henry turned from teaching to retail business, Jacob was among other things, a salesman, Albert worked as a boiler engineer, Bernhard served as a teacher and minister, Armin retired as a manager of the Pacific Milk Cannery, and Harvey was proprietor of a retail business.

FUEL FOR THE PIONEER HOME

As mentioned earlier, the main source of fuel during the pioneer days was poplar wood which was plentiful on almost every homestead. However, this wood had to be cut, hauled home, sawed, split, stacked and seasoned before it was ready for use. In late fall or early winter after harvesting was completed and the fields had been cultivated in preparation for next spring seeding, the adult males prepared the family's year's supply of fuel. Early in the morning, with a team of horses hitched to a bobsled, they left for the woods where they chopped and branched poplar trees. In the afternoon the trees were loaded and hauled home. This continued day after day until they had a year's supply.

Archibald Lampman vividly describes the hauling home of the logs, in his poem, *A January Morning*. Following are the words of his closing sestet:

"And here behind me come the woodmen's sleighs
With shouts and clamorous squeakings, might and main

Up the steep slope the horses stamp and strain,
Urged by hoarse-tongued drivers - cheeks ablaze,
Iced beards and frozen eyelids - team by team,
With frost-fringed flanks and nostrils jetting steam."

The logs were then sawed into pieces approximately fourteen inches in length by means of a rotary saw, the blade measuring about 30 inches in diameter and powered by a small stationary gasoline engine. The following spring this wood was split and piled in neat rows where it seasoned and was ready for use the following year. Thus most farmers had a two-year supply of fuel on hand. It is true that the wood was free, but a great deal of time and physical labor were required in the preparation.

FOOD FOR THE FAMILY

Regardless how scarce money was in pioneer days, there was never a lack of good nourishable food for the family. Most of these Mennonites had large families with anywhere from eight to fifteen children. They invariably had a very large garden which supplied them with fresh vegetables all summer, and for the winter the cucumbers and unripened watermelons were pickled, often in a thirty-five-gallon wooden barrel. The peas and beans were left to ripen in the garden. After the first frost a number of children, supervised by a parent, would pick the pods, put them in piles and allow them to dry for a few days. The family members, each with a container, gathered in a circle around the piles and shelled the peas and beans, often harvesting several gallons in this manner. Cabbage was cut fine and stored in three to five-gallon stone crocks in cool cellars. It was not unusual for a farmer to harvest a sixty-bushel wagon load of potatoes and store them in a bin for the winter. Other plants such as dill, sage, onions and the like were hung to dry either in the sun or in a granary and then stored in a dry place. Carrots, beets, and turnips remained fresh all winter if stored in sand in a cool cellar.

Fruit, too, was plentiful in most of the pioneer homes.

During the month of July the family members, each with a pail in hand, went to the woods to pick such berries as saskatoons, blueberries, wild strawberries, choke cherries and pin cherries. Such fruit as wild plums, raspberries, currants, and gooseberries were generally home grown. The mother and older daughters were then kept busy preserving gallons of jams, jellies, and other preserves from these native and home grown berries. The saskatoon berries were often sun-dried by spreading them over a large screen supported by a saw-horse on either end. Placing them on a screen allowed the air to get at them from all sides, thus speeding up the drying process and keeping them from molding. Apples were imported from the eastern provinces, not usually in boxes or small packages, but in wooden barrels holding 120 pounds of apples each. Three such barrels was usually sufficient to supply the needs of any family. Other fruits purchased in smaller quantities were apricots, blue plums, pears, and so on. These were preserved and served as dessert to finish the meal.

Flour was seldom purchased from the store. The town of Rosthern had a flour mill where the farmers took a load of wheat and in exchange received an amount of flour which was equal in value. This flour was bagged in 98-pound sacks. Thus in the fall the farmer brought home a year's supply of flour. Bakers were few and far between so that all pioneer women did their own baking for the family.

Every farmer raised pigs and beef for his family's consumption. Late in fall, usually during the month of November, there were daily "butchering-bees." Early in the morning, before day-break, a group of invited neighbors gathered at a certain farm to butcher a number of pigs and usually one steer. The meat was then cut and processed. This supplied the family with lard, spareribs, bacon, chops, cheese, pickled feet, smoke sausage, liver sausage, and so on.

Since there were no deep freezes most of this meat was stored in a cold place and eaten during the winter months. The hams were thoroughly salted and placed in brine for

a period and when spring arrived they were smoked. The cured ham kept well through the summer. Chickens supplied the pioneer with eggs and fowl and the cows supplied the milk and cream. Every pioneer had a churn and made his own butter. The few groceries that the farmer's wife was required to purchase, she usually managed to get in exchange for her surplus eggs and butter in a local grocery store.

RAILWAYS AND TOWNS

Settlement was accelerated after completion of the east-west Pacific Railway in 1885. The first Saskatchewan train arrived in Regina on August 23, 1882. The Qu'Appelle, Long Lake, and Saskatchewan Railways were completed in 1890, running from Regina in the south through Saskatoon and the Saskatchewan Valley to Rosthern and north to Prince Albert. This railway made its first scheduled journey through Rosthern in September of 1890. It was then leased to the Canadian Pacific Railway until it was sold to the Canadian Northern Railway in 1910. An article in the January 1989 issue of the *Saskatchewan Valley News* reads as follows: "Because of the historical significance of the line and its importance to the early settlement of Saskatchewan, it seems fitting to arrange some type of celebration or activities to publicize the 100 year anniversary of the construction of the C.N. Rail line between Regina and Prince Albert."

At the time of this writing, the former C.N.R. station is no longer used by the Railway Company. It has been newly renovated and in October 1990 it was officially opened as the "Station Arts Centre/Seager Wheeler Place." Seager Wheeler, in whose honor the Arts Centre is named, was one of the early pioneer farmers at Rosthern and is best known for his repeated success as a prize winner in wheat at international competitions, and for the three strains of wheat he developed, Marquis 10B, Red Bobs, and Kitchener. He also developed new varieties of barley and oats, and introduced several species of fruit trees to the area.

Settlers from Europe and from the United States of America began to arrive in large numbers during the decade of the 1890s. One of the choice areas of settlement was the Saskatchewan Valley, north of Saskatoon through the heart of which was laid the north-south railroad. Mennonites from Manitoba and Russia arrived at Rosthern in 1891 and during the next several years to follow.

By 1905 when the total population of Saskatchewan was approximately 230,000 and the total population of Saskatoon was approximately 3000, about 4000 Mennonites including the Fast and Epp families had settled in Saskatchewan.

At the same time as the railway was being built through Saskatchewan Valley, the company built railway stations about nine miles apart. (The distance you could drive horses before they needed to be fed and watered.) One branch line ran through Langham, Dalmeny, Mennon, Hepburn, Waldheim, Laird, and terminated at Carlton. These villages and towns had stations built by the Railway Company, Post Offices by the Federal Government, and grain elevators by the grain companies.

Almost immediately private individuals erected small businesses around these stations. As an example, by 1915, Laird had a general store, a hardware store, a grocery store, a harness shop together with shoe and harness repair, a blacksmith shop, a tinsmith shop, a lumberyard, a livery barn including a livery team, a hotel, a restaurant, three grain elevators, farm implement dealers, and other businesses to meet the needs of the early pioneers. Business flourished in these towns.

SURVEYING THE WESTERN TERRITORIES AND ROAD CONSTRUCTION

The Dominion Lands Survey of the Dominion Lands Branch was established in 1871, to survey the western territories of Canada, just 20 years prior to the arrival of Wave Two. Land was divided into six mile square (10 km by 10 km) townships containing 36 sections of 640 acres each. Each section was then divided into four equal parts

measuring one-half mile square ($\frac{1}{4}$ section) containing 160 acres.

Running north-south a road allowance was surveyed every mile; running east-west the Dominion Lands Branch allowed space for road development every two miles. In 1883 about eleven million hectares were surveyed in connection with the land grants to the Canadian Pacific Railway along its western route. However, the early pioneers did not necessarily travel these routes until such a time when roads were constructed. For example, to the village of Laird you could find trails converging from every direction and before long the wagon tracks were so well established that no one thought of following the road allowances.

Perhaps the first road built in the Saskatchewan Valley area was from Rosthern 12 miles west and then south through Waldheim until it met up with number 12 highway running through Saskatoon to Regina. This road was known as the Rosthern Townline and is still frequently referred to by that name.

Road construction in pioneer days and even up to the mid or late 1920s was done by horse power. One man with a 14-inch share hand-plow powered by a two-horse team would turn over the sods where the ditch was to be. Then three or four four-horse teams hitched to scrapers would move the sods to the center of the road and level it. The highways were built in the same way except that gravel was hauled in horse-drawn boxwagons and scattered over the road. Needless to say, during rainy seasons the few cars that existed could not travel along the highways much less on the secondary roads. Most of the road building in the Saskatchewan Valley was done by Mennonite farmers in lieu of taxes, thus reducing their tax bills to almost nil.

Each year after the first heavy snow-fall in autumn, all roads were blocked - cars were placed on blocks and stored away until spring. The only means of travel during the winter season was by horse and sleigh except for the young men who might choose to ride horseback.

EDUCATION

When the small Wave of the 1890s settled in an area where nature had never before been disturbed by human hand there was plenty of hard physical labor awaiting them. However, they never lost sight of their two main goals, namely to build schools and churches. Until such a time when public schools could and would be built, they had their own private schools in the German language and taught mainly the basic skills. However, as early as 1897 the Carmen School District, then called the Waldheim Rural, was organized. The school was built $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles north of the present town of Waldheim. By July 15, 1904 the people east of Waldheim petitioned for a school and by February 1906 the Danzig School, three miles east and one mile north of Waldheim, was ready for classes to begin.

Lilly School, located across the South Saskatchewan river from the Saskatchewan Valley, is another example of such a school. It is not a school built by our forebears but its history is very similar to that of all other one-room schools built by the pioneers of Saskatchewan. It is here that the author, Bernhard Fast and his wife Mary, spent nineteen years of his teaching career. Their three children were raised here and received their elementary education at this school. Following are a few points of interest gleaned from the minutes of meetings held by the local school board.

Two acres of land were purchased at twenty-five dollars per acre. In the minutes of June 5, 1911 we find that the proposed school be 20 feet by 30 feet with 10-foot walls on a concrete foundation. The exterior was to be covered with spruce, paper, and lap siding. The school was built for an estimated cost of \$750.00. This then was the birth of Lilly School District #2841, located seven and one-half miles north of Aberdeen, Saskatchewan. The school opened in May of 1913 in a multi-cultural community consisting of people mainly of German, Ukrainian, and Scottish origins. In 1928 a new teacherage was built at a total cost of \$845.00

A few years later the ratepayers agreed that a larger

school should be their priority. The sum of \$4,300.00 at 6½ % was borrowed through debentures for the purpose of constructing a new 24 foot of 40 foot school house which was built during the summer of 1930. An interesting note in the minutes shows that Mr. P.M. Friesen received 30 cents an hour to be superintendent of construction. Today, sixty-one years later, this is the building which holds many fond memories for those who attended that school.

Most of the young and many of the middle-age people of today have never attended a one-room rural school where one teacher taught all the grades from I to VIII. At the birth of our province a school district was on the average an area of 12 square miles (30 square kilometers). This was four miles long and three miles wide (6 k x 5 k), with the school at the center. This would give the student farthest from school a three mile walk before and again after school, with an average enrolment of 25 to 35 students. The building consisted of one room as a classroom and a small annex as a cloakroom to be shared by the boys and girls. Other buildings on the premises were a barn for the horses with which the children drove to school in winter, two outhouses for boys and girls respectively, a coal shed, and a one-bedroom teacherage. The size of the school yard was usually two acres.

The library consisted of a maximum of about 50 books. At the fall opening of school each student received a *Reader*, supplied by the Department of Education, which was really the only source of the child's reading material for the year. Textbooks such as history, geography, and arithmetic, of which there were no more than one per two pupils, were purchased by the local board after consulting with the teacher. Each student had to supply his own slate, pencil, and scribbler. Until about the year 1920 most of the writing was done on slates with slate pencils. Each child had a bottle of water and a cloth to wash off the writing at the end of each period.

The compulsory school age was from age seven to fourteen years. Most children did not begin school until the September after their seventh birthday and packed up their books and slates on their 14th birthday. This meant

that the majority of children attended school for six or seven years, hence very few rural students ever completed Grade VIII. To obtain a Grade VIII certificate the student had to go to the nearest town to write Departmental Examinations at the end of June. These were then sent to Regina where they were evaluated and the results mailed to the students.

David Toews of Rosthern, Saskatchewan, who was both a teacher and a homestead farmer, and in 1900 was elected a Rosenort Mennonite minister, had determined that the Saskatchewan Board of Education had the power to authorize a half-hour period at the end of a school day for German language instruction and to prescribe the texts to be used in such instruction. Since, however, the two-hour noon recess was unnecessarily long for farm children, who brought their lunch and stayed all day, Toews recommended that the hour from one to two o'clock be utilized for classes in the German language. This would leave the half-hour at the end of the day for religion, also in German. The Saskatchewan Board of Education granted this privilege to the Mennonite emigrants. It followed that the schools in the Mennonite settlements would require teachers who were qualified to teach not only the course prescribed by the Department of Education, but also give instruction in German and religion.

Since teachers qualified to instruct in both the German and English languages were difficult to obtain, our forebears decided to build an Academy where their sons would have the opportunity to obtain a high school education and become teachers. Thus the German-English Academy, the forerunner of the present Rosthern Junior College was built in Rosthern in 1905, the year when the District of Saskatchewan in the North-West Territories became the province of Saskatchewan. The first teacher in this Academy was a man by the name of Herman Fast.

That three-room school commonly known as G.E.A. was built by the pioneers of Wave Two at a time when many of their own dwelling places were still log cabins. The reason why these people were so determined to build such an institute was mainly two-fold. First they wanted to

preserve their Mennonite heritage. Not only would the graduates be more suitable teachers for the public schools where only Mennonite children were enrolled, but at the same time it was hoped that in the future these more qualified members of the community would serve as ministers and other church workers.

The German-English Academy was in operation only nine months a year to permit the young male students to help their fathers with harvest operations. Furthermore, approximately one-third of the instruction time was allotted to the teaching of German and religion including Anabaptist and Mennonite history. Two-thirds of the time was devoted to the teaching of compulsory subjects as outlined by the Department of Education. Because most one-room rural schools did not have teachers well qualified to teach Grade VIII, the Rosthern Academy taught Grade VIII, third class, and second class. Third class was two decades later divided into Grades IX and X, and second class became Grade XI, while first class was later called Grade XII. The teaching of Grade VIII was dropped in the German-English Academy in the mid 1920s and Grade XII was added towards the end of 1920s. Now in the 1980s the grades taught in the Rosthern Junior College are ten, eleven, and twelve.

GEA - DATES OF INTEREST - RJC

March 7, 1903 - At a meeting in Eigenheim, to look into the possibilities of building a German-English Teachers' Training Institute, David Toews was elected the first chairman and Herman Fast was elected as secretary.

March 21, 1903 - The executive proposed that the school be a German-English High School rather than a Teachers' Training School.

June 6, 1903 - The constitution was drafted.

June 10, 1903 - The meeting decided to build the school near a town.

June 15, 1903 - The board purchased three acres of land west of the town of Rosthern for \$150.00.

July 14, 1904 - "Saskatchewan House" was rented for \$200.00 per year to serve as temporary quarters for the school.

February 2, 1905 - The farmers were asked to accept the assignment of three cents per seeded acre for five years to go as a donation to the school.

November 14, 1905 - The school opens. Mr. Herman Fast, who was fluent in the German, English, and Russian languages was engaged as principal for \$70.00 per month. Six students registered.

February 1906 - The enrolment increased to 21 students.

June 1906 - David Toews was appointed as principal.

August 6, 1909 - \$6000.00 was borrowed from the bank to build the school. It was decided to build it on the outskirts of Rosthern.

July 5, 1910 - The German-English Academy was officially opened.

June 1939 - Mr. K.G. Toews, principal, introduced a plan to change the name Academy to Junior College.

March 1949 - A resolution was passed to build a new school. K.G. Toews and John C. Friesen assumed the leadership in this project.

June 1956 - Ground breaking ceremony for the first stage of construction of the new school.

June 1957 - Dedication of the completed portion of the new school.

June 1962 - *Thousand Dollar Plan* was completed. Four hundred and twenty-six people had pledged \$400,000.00 in interest-free loans.

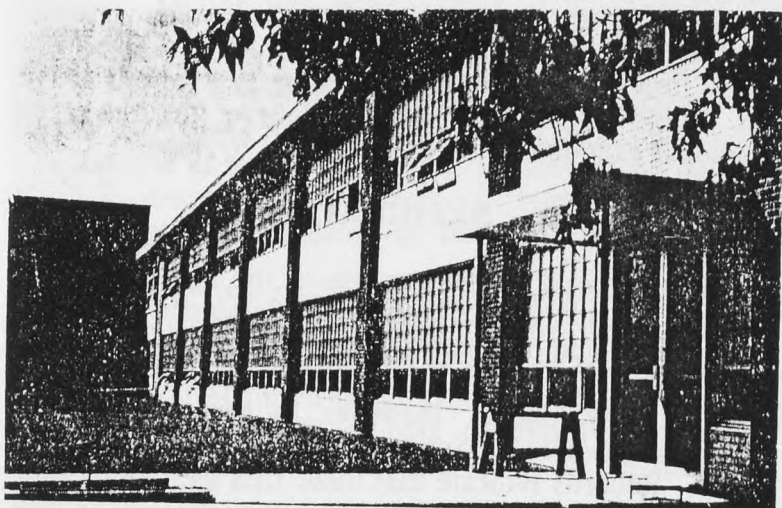
October 1962 - W.C. Wells' tender for \$308,000.00 to complete the school plant was accepted.

Then



German-English Academy

Now



*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ's
I Cor. 3:11*

Rosthern Junior College

In the mid 1940s the Larger School Unit Act of Saskatchewan was passed. Many rural schools were closed and the children transported by bus to the nearest town where larger schools were built to accommodate the influx of rural children. Today there are very few one-room rural schools in operation in the province of Saskatchewan.

In terms of supervision, it was required by the law that each rural school had to be inspected at least twice a year to evaluate the work done by the teacher and to check on the progress of the students. The official responsible for this task was called *Inspector*; later he acquired the title of *Superintendent*; today he is known as *Director of Education*. School supervision was difficult because as mentioned earlier, the roads were frequently impassable for cars in winter. The inspector would then travel by train to a small town on Monday morning, find accommodation in the hotel, and would then be taken by livery team to all the rural schools of that local area, generally visiting two schools a day and returning to his home base by railroad on Friday afternoon.

From all of this it is evident that these early pioneers cherished education and sacrificed much through very difficult times to ensure that succeeding generations would have access to quality schools where the level of educational excellence would be second to none.

RELIGION

While a religious foundation was of the highest priority for these early Mennonite pioneers of Saskatchewan, there was no elected and ordained minister among the first group of emigrants which landed at Rosthern and settled between Rosthern and Waldheim. However, by general consensus they met somewhere on Sunday mornings and worshipped together. Records indicate that these first gatherings took place in the homes of Aron Friesen (Eigenheim), Johann Andres (Rosthern), and Heinrich Epp (Waldheim). These services consisted of someone reading the Scripture, a silent prayer while kneeling, a brief discussion on the reading, and the singing of hymns.

By 1893 another group, which included a minister, the Reverend Peter Regier, settled. He was invited to take charge of the religious activities of the settlement. At the first Brotherhood (no sisters were permitted to attend) meeting on July 2, 1894 the foundation for the Rosenorter Gemeinde of Saskatchewan was laid. To this group of churches or congregations under one Bishop with a group of lay ministers serving the churches in rotation belong the following: Rosthern, Tiefengrund, Eigenheim, Laird, Waldheim, Hague, Aberdeen, Osler, and a few groups meeting in schools such as Danzig, Carmen, Silberfeld, and so on.

A few weeks after the first Brotherhood meeting, they assembled again to elect ministers and deacons. These lay ministers and deacons were elected for life, were farmers by vocation and served without any remuneration. The mother church of the Rosenort congregations of North-West Territories, District of Saskatchewan, was Eigenheim, six miles due west of Rosthern. On October 26, 1895 the Brotherhood decided to build a house of worship. During that winter many of the men cut and prepared logs and on June 4, 1896, four years after the first church was built in Saskatoon, the people from within a radius of more than ten miles gathered for the dedication service. Reverend Peter Regier was the first Bishop of the congregation to serve with Holy Communion and Baptism. The following spring Jacob Fast and Helena Epp were two of the baptism candidates in this log cabin church in Eigenheim.

Members of the Epp family who were first elected as deacons and in 1902 as ministers were David Epp and Henry Warkentin, brother and brother-in-law respectively of grandfather Heinrich Epp. Outside of communion and baptismal services, the schools continued to be church related meeting places until the close of the horse and buggy era.

The first Rosthern Mennonite Church was built and dedicated in 1903. The congregation grew rapidly so that a large new building was erected in 1912 and the old building was sold to the Swedenborgian (Church of the

New Jerusalem) congregation. Today, 79 years later it still serves the Swedenborgian congregation. By 1910 four more Rosenort Mennonite congregations had completed their building programs, namely: Laird, Aberdeen, Waldheim, and Tiefengrund. Hague dedicated its first church in 1911.

Numerous changes have taken place since then. As the general population shifted from mainly rural to urban, so did Mennonites. The first Mennonite Church in Saskatoon was opened in 1936. At present this city boasts fourteen churches of that faith. The language used in worship services until 40 years ago was almost entirely German; today twelve of these churches in this city have only English services, one mainly Chinese, and one has one German and one English service every Sunday morning. The first English service in Aberdeen was at a funeral on December 2, 1946. The first English Sunday morning service was in the early 1950s. There is no longer one Bishop (Aeltester) as head over a number of congregations, each unit has its own minister who is fully ordained to serve in all capacities including communion services and baptism. Practically all spiritual heads of the congregations now hold College or Seminary degrees in theology - either Bachelor of Christian Education, Bachelor of Theology, Master of Theology or even Doctor of Theology. Whereas in the earlier years the ministers were elected for life and served without remuneration, hence had to have another occupation or profession to provide their daily bread, now almost all are hired for a fixed term and paid a salary similar to that of a public school teacher.

Chapter VIII

EMIGRANTS OF THE 1920s

IN SEARCH OF FREEDOM

As was mentioned in Chapter VI, approximately 21,000 Mennonites emigrated from Russia to Canada during the period from 1923 to 1930. The Bergen-Thiessen family belong to this group. The father, Mr. Heinrich Thiessen died in Russia and Mrs. Helena Thiessen came to Canada in 1925 with most of her family. With her were the following children: Nettie, John, Tina, Lisa, Peter, David, Mary (Maria), and Teressa. Jacob had died in 1918 in Russia, Henry came to Canada in 1926 and Helena, who was the only one married at the time, together with her husband, Abram Wiebe, chose to stay in the land of their birth.

Johann Bergen, maternal grandfather of Mary (Thiessen) Fast was born in Holland on January 25, 1814. Grandmother, Aganetha (Block) Bergen was born on November 12, 1830 in what was part of Germany at that time. Johann and Aganetha were married November 7, 1863. Johann died on February 3, 1911. The paternal grandparents of Mary (Thiessen) Fast were Heinrich Thiessen Sr. and Susannah Reimer. The writer finds no records to indicate either place, time of birth or marriage of Heinrich Thiessen Sr. and Susanna Reimer. Their son Heinrich Thiessen Jr. married Helena Bergen on September 8, 1896. Both Heinrich Thiessen Jr. and Helena Bergen were born in Nieder Chortitz, Ukraine, Russia where Helena received her elementary education in the village school and her secondary education in a Zentralschule. Heinrich was born November 14, 1875 and died November 23, 1917 at the age of 42 years. Helena was born December 17, 1872 and died November 25, 1955. They had lived together in holy matrimony for only 21 years.

Thiessen Family Registration

Auszug aus dem Kirchenbuche
Seite 54 der Mennoniten Kirchengemeinde
Hassmanshop, Anradaker Wäld, Balaschower
Kreis, Saratower Gouvernement.

Familien - verzeichnis

Familien-, Vor-, Na- chname u. Zeit der Eheschließung.	Revision	Zeit der Geburt.			Zeit der Taufe.			Anmerkung
		Jahr	Monat	Tag	Jahr	Monat	Tag	
Tiessen Heinrich Heinrich		1875	Nov.	14	1876	Mai	13	gest. 1917
" Helene Johann		1872	Dec.	17	1872	"	25	
geb. Borgen								
1896 den 4 ^{ten} Sept.								
Kinder:								
Angaretha Tiessen	Nieder - Chortitza	1898	Juni	15	1919	Mai	28	
Johann		1906	März	1				
Katharina		1907	Mai	16	1925	Juli	19	
Liese		1908	März	4				
Peter		1916	"	27				
David		1912	Aug.	24				
Maria		1915	Juni	26				
Angaretha		1926	Mai	16				Mutter N. 3.

1930 25.
VII
Leitender Prediger: P. Olfert
Kirchensuchführer: L. Harkentien

During their years in Nieder Chortitz, Mr. Thiessen's occupation was livery-man and dray-man, having a team of light-harness horses and a carriage to take people from place to place somewhat like a taxi today, and three dray teams and wagons to haul freight. Mrs. Thiessen operated a hotel and restaurant besides being the homemaker, thus it is obvious that there was little time for idleness.

In 1908 the Thiessen family moved to Arkadak, Russia where they bought a farm and lived in the village of Dmetrovka Number three. (On the preceeding page you will find the Thiessen family registration taken from the Mennonite Church Register in Arkadak.) The city of Arkadak was approximately 440 miles east of Moscow and approximately 160 miles north of the seaport, Penza. They lived here until leaving for Canada in 1925. At Dmetrovka the Thiessen family bought a farm and engaged in growing fruits and vegetables and in grain farming. As a sideline Mr. Thiessen served as the village clerk and worked in a sunflower mill until his death.

It was there during the Bolschewick Revolution that Heinrich died, leaving his wife Helena and their ten children to suffer the trials of the Revolution, the persecution and starvation that were to follow. The first seven children were born in Nieder Chortitz, Russia; Peter, David and Mary were born at Arkadak, Russia. After the Revolution conditions for the Mennonites in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic deteriorated rapidly. Their land was confiscated, leaving the family only their home and a few acres of land with little machinery and horse-power with which to cultivate the land. To keep from starvation they seeded what little grain they had by hand and harvested it by horse-drawn flail, indeed, a primitive method. Other than that they grew vegetables and could only hope that this hard-earned small crop would not be taken from them for the winter.

Before the Bolschewick Revolution the village of Dmetrovka Number Three had its own elementary school with Mennonite teachers only, giving instruction in both the German and Russian languages as well as in religion

and Mennonite history. When the Communists took control of the government, only the students in lower elementary grades were permitted to attend the village school where Peter, David and Mary were enrolled. The senior elementary student, including Lisa Thiessen, were obliged to attend a state school outside the Mennonite Wolost and staffed by teachers of Communist conviction. Even the Mennonite village schools were now staffed with one Mennonite and one Communist teacher. Religion and Mennonite history was no longer tolerated in the schools; in its place the emphasis was on Communism and its philosophy.

Though most of the above refers specifically to the Thiessen-Bergen family, practically all Mennonites in Russia at that time had similar experiences as we read in *Wave Three* of Chapter VI.

Thus during the large scale exodus of the 1920s the Thiessen family prepared to leave the land they had loved, in search of new land and religious freedom. After obtaining all the required documents from the Russian government and the *Entry Permits* from the Canadian government, they packed their few belongings - clothes, bedding, dishes, a few keepsakes and sufficient money and food, including a bag of toasted bread to last until they would board the ship at Riga.

FROM DMETROVKA TO SOUTHAMPTON

A neighbor, Jacob Klassen, took the Thiessen family together with what little belongings they had, to the city of Arkadak, a distance of less than two miles. From here they travelled by rail to Moscow, a distance of approximately 440 miles. Here the family had an emotional departure! To say, *Auf Wiedersehen* (until we meet again) *Gott mit euch* (God be with you) to scores of friends and neighbors and especially to Henry Thiessen and Helena (Thiessen) Wiebe, members of the family who remained in Russia, caused near heart-breaks because in all likelihood they would never see each other again. (Helena did see most of her siblings again 53 years later

when she came to Canada for a three months visit.)

After changing trains in Moscow they continued together with a large number of fellow Mennonites to Riga, a seaport on the Baltic Sea in Latvia, SSR. When the train reached the border between the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic and Latvia SSR it had to pass through a huge *Gate* where the passengers had to disembark and board the Latvian train to cross Latvia SSR to the seaport city of Riga. It was not until they had passed through the *Gate* that the emigrants felt secure from the clutches of the Soviets - they would reach the land of liberty! At this point they rejoiced with one accord, gave thanks and united their voices in songs of praise and thanksgiving. *We're free!* They had indeed good reasons to offer thanks and praise for having been delivered from the evil clutches, cruel beyond imagination, of Joseph Stalin as described in the follow quotation.

The National Geographic, March 1990 relates the following: "Joseph Stalin sent 17 to 25 millions or more to labor camps from 1928 until his death in 1953... guards shot 30 prisoners daily to frighten the rest of us... He (Stalin) began to eliminate his enemies, real or imagined, anyone he didn't like. (He didn't like Mennonites.) By 1938 the Great Terror stalked the land: more than a million executed, perhaps seven million in camps - they died of malnutrition, tuberculosis, execution - about 10 percent or more a year."

As mentioned when the Thiessen family emigrated, Abram and Helena (Thiessen) Wiebe, for personal reasons opted to remain in Russia. Abram was later sent to a hard labor camp in Siberia where his death was reported on March 20, 1938. Since the cause of his death was never made known to the family, it was likely one of those causes mentioned in the above quotation. A map tracing the Thiessen family's journey can be found on a following page. From Riga they were taken by S.S. Baltara across the Baltic Sea north around Denmark, across the North Sea and into the harbor of Southampton, England.

It was at this point that all their baggage was labeled with the picture of a bundle of wheat with C.P.R. in bold

letters printed across the sheaf and a similar pin was fastened on each emigrant's outer garment. This symbolized that the Canadian Pacific Railway Company held itself responsible for the transportation of these emigrants to the grain belt of Canada. Below is a reproduction of this symbol.



While awaiting their departure from Southampton to Canada the group had the opportunity to take some sight-seeing tours to and through the city of London, England, a treat which they shall never forget. Records indicate that all emigrants before setting sail for Canada were required by the Canadian government to have a thorough medical examination. The *Medical Certificate* of Mary Thiessen below indicates that the members of the Thiessen family were examined by the Medical Health Officer, Dr. E.W. Drury in Southampton on July 23, 1925 and found to be in good health. At long last all obstacles had been overcome; the way was clear for the long voyage across the Atlantic Ocean.

Медицинское свидетельство.
Medical Certificate.

FOR PHOTOGRAPH
ФОТОГРАФИЯ


Maria Thiessen

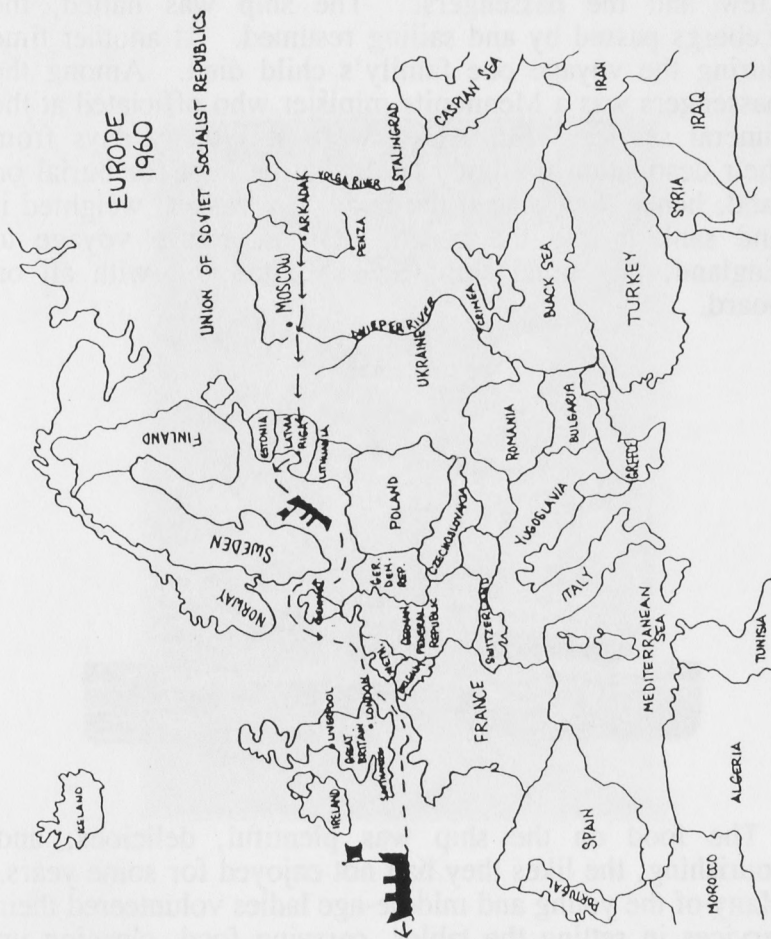
This is to certify that I have medically examined
the bearer of this Identification Card and find him/her
in good health.

Forwarding authorised.

CANADIAN PACIFIC Medical Officer
23 JUL 1925
PASSED.
DR E. W. DRURY.

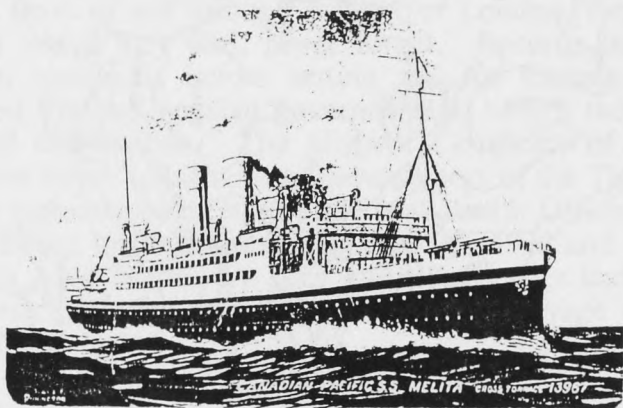
1925,





FROM SOUTHAMPTON TO ROSTHERN

The voyage on the Canadian Pacific Steamship Melita went well with a few exceptions. Icebergs obstructed the passage at one point causing some concern to both the crew and the passengers. The ship was halted, the icebergs passed by and sailing resumed. At another time during the voyage one family's child died. Among the passengers was a Mennonite minister who officiated at the funeral service. Since they were still many days from their destination the body could not be kept for burial on land, hence they placed the body in a casket, weighted it and sank it into the ocean. On its return voyage to England, this same ship, S.S. Melita sank with all on board.



The food on the ship was plentiful, delicious, and nourishing, the likes they had not enjoyed for some years. Many of the young and middle-age ladies volunteered their services in setting the tables, carrying food, cleaning up and so on. In return for this favor the ship's caterers often treated the volunteers to special dainties and fruit. As a diversion they could watch movies, play games or join in sing-songs, as well as attend the regular worship services. From the time they got their medical examination to the day of docking in Quebec, Canada, was a period of forty


days. From Quebec these emigrants travelled via Canadian Pacific Railway to the town of Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Great was the joy when they had finally arrived at what was to be their new home.



**Johann and Aganetha (Block) Bergen
with their daughters: Aganetha
and Helen (Mrs. Thiessen)**

**Grandparents, aunt and mother of
Mary (Thiessen) Fast**

As mentioned earlier, Henry Thiessen came to Canada a year later but Helena and her husband Abram Wiebe opted to remain in Russia where Abram died on March 20, 1938 leaving Helena to provide for their six sons. In 1941 the Russian government sent them to Siberia where they experienced severest hardships as recorded under the title *Wave Three*. In 1957 Helena and her sons moved to Kirgize SSR near the Mongolian border, where the government provided her with a small cottage as residence and about an acre of land to grow vegetables to supplement her meager income. This is where she lived until her death on August 8, 1989.

(THIRD CLASS)	
IMMIGRATION IDENTIFICATION CARD	
THIS CARD MUST BE SHOWN TO THE EXAMINING OFFICER AT PORT OF ARRIVAL	
Name of passenger	Thiessen Maria
Name of ship	MELITA
Name appears on Return, sheet	28
Medical Examination Stamp	Civil Examination Stamp
	

The Identification Card of Mary Thiessen

LIFE IN CANADA

As previously mentioned, the Russian government confiscated all the land and property of those Mennonites who emigrated, hence they depended entirely on credit and employment when they arrived in Canada. Upon their arrival in Rosthern every family was met by someone who was prepared to accommodate them until such a time when they could shift for themselves. The Thiessen family was

met by Henry Ungers and was welcomed into their home on a farm two miles north-east of Laird, Saskatchewan.



Mother Helena Thiessen was very grateful that she and most of her children were now Canadian Citizens.

At the time when the emigrants of the 1920s, including the Thiessen family, came to Saskatchewan, this province enjoyed a healthy economy. Land was valuable; wages and salaries were relatively high. Many of the Old Colony Mennonites and Bergthalers were anxious to sell their land, horses and machinery, and move to Mexico and South America respectively to avoid sending their children to public schools where they were required to learn the English language and as they feared, *become too worldly*

wise. This was an opportune time for the newcomers to purchase land and settle among fellow believers. Other settlers bought land from Canadians who had farmed on a large scale and were ready for retirement. With the help of the Settlement Board several large farms were purchased on half-crop payments. Besides the Sheldon and Rowse farms at Hanley, the Meilicki and Schwager Number 1 and Number 2 farms at Dundurn, a total of about 20 large farms were purchased. The families who settled on these farms formed what is known as the *Nordheimer Gemeinde* (Congregation). Branches of this congregation are presently at Pleasant Point, Hanley, and Dundurn. The Sheldon farm was the largest with 32 families. The Rowse farm had five families, Schwager Number 1 and Number 2 farms had eight and seven families respectively, while the Peterson farm had four families. Thus one way or another they all managed to obtain land.

As mentioned earlier, upon the arrival at Rosthern the Thiessen family was welcomed into the home of Henry Ungers near Laird where they were accommodated for the time being. Within two months they moved into a suite in the village of Laird at a monthly rate of nine dollars. Generally the new arrivals adjusted very well to their new environment and experiences. During the winter months in Laird, the mother with her oldest son, John, attended night classes taking English as a second language; the younger children, of course, attended the regular public school.

The following spring the family moved to a grain farm near Dalmeny. Four years later they settled on a farm four miles east of Mennon, Saskatchewan, where they were engaged mainly in grain farming on two quarter sections of land while at the same time they milked half a dozen cows and raised pigs and chickens for their own consumption. To help finance the farm, several members of the family sought employment in Saskatoon and elsewhere. For a few years all seemed to work out as planned but things changed with the coming of the Great Depression.



**John Thiessen hauls grain to
an elevator in Saskatchewan.**



Helena Thiessen's home in the Fraser Valley, B.C.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

During most of the 1930s there was next to no precipitation the year round; pastures were dry; in many areas of Saskatchewan there was no crop for several years in succession, indeed, the harvest did not yield sufficient fruit for next spring's seeding, forcing the government to go outside its own province to purchase seed so that the farmers could put in their crop next spring.

Prices slumped: eggs sold for six cents a dozen, the price of milk was five cents a quart, coffee fifteen cents a pound, the farmers who had a little grain to sell received as low as twenty-five cents a bushel for wheat, the price paid for a cow was not enough to cover the cost of the freight to the stockyards, the price of gasoline was twenty-five cents per gallon (five cents per liter). Teachers' salaries were as low as two hundred dollars a year and in many instances they were paid in promissory notes. A woman's silk dress was advertised in T. Eaton's Sale Catalogue for \$2.98 but few and far between were the ladies who could afford to buy it.

Then came government relief - not as we know social aid in our day. Families with five or more children received from five to a maximum of fifteen dollars in government aid per month with which to buy food and clothing. People could not afford to pay five cents a liter for gasoline so they removed the motors from their cars and converted them into horse-drawn *Bennet Buggies*, named after the Prime Minister of Canada of the day, The Right Honorable R.B. Bennet. The farmers' debts increased from year to year because not even the interest on the loans could be paid, much less the principal. Ironically enough in many cases the former owner repossessed the land, then offered it to the same buyer for a greatly reduced price and the interest down to as low as 3%. Thus many farmers made a fresh start and, indeed, most of them were quite successful.

There was still plenty of land north of the then settled part of Saskatchewan, which the government opened up as homesteads. Much of it consisted of grassland, woodland,

and sloughs and was perhaps not the best soil for grain growing but it provided a home and an economical means to raise cattle and engage in a small way in mixed farming. Many families loaded their belongings on wagons, tied cows behind and by means of horse power literally sought and found greener pastures north on the newly opened homesteads. These farmers made a meager living during the depression years but many became well-to-do in later years.

There was a third group which was neither prepared to repurchase the land they had lost, for a reduced price, nor to move to northern homesteads. British Columbia with its fertile soil, mild climate and plenty of moisture appealed to many. In British Columbia the rate of unemployment seemed to be low, the wages relatively satisfactory and there was land available. Hence, during the period from 1932 to 1942 many families, including the Thiessen family, loaded their belongings in box cars and transported them by rail to British Columbia. Two Thiessen family members: Lisa, Mrs. Jacob Unger, and Mary, Mrs. Bernhard Fast chose to remain in Saskatchewan where their husbands were employed. Mrs. Helen Thiessen and three of her sons: John, Peter, and Henry purchased thirty-five acres of land in the Fraser Valley, B.C. where they engaged in vegetable farming with a small dairy as a sideline. This venture proved quite successful; in time their debts were paid and all went according to hopes and plans. It was here in December 1955 that Mrs. Helena Thiessen died after a life of hardships and struggle, but in her final years she had rest, success, and peace. Eventually the sons retired in a beautiful new home in Cloverdale, British Columbia, in the land they had learned to love and call homeland.

It may be of interest to the readers how the other members of the Thiessen family fared during and after the *Great Depression*. David Thiessen, the youngest of the four brothers worked as an assistant cook in the Bessborough Hotel, Saskatoon, for a number of years. During the summer months he accepted invitations to be head chef at Canadian National Hotels in National Parks

such as Lake Louise and Montreal. During World War II he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Navy where he served until armistice in 1945. Then he, assisted by his wife, Audrey, found employment as head chef in such places as a lumber camp, on a C.N.R. train, and their own Cross Roads Restaurant at Harrison Hot Springs, British Columbia. For a few years he tried his hand at vegetable farming in British Columbia but soon came to the conclusion that being a chef was his preference; thus he made that his vocation until his retirement.

Tina, after having worked in several hotels in Saskatoon, was engaged as housekeeper in the Bessborough Hotel, Saskatoon, until she moved to the West Coast. In later years her husband, Bill Abbott, worked for Boeing Aircraft in Seattle, Washington, U.S.A., while she was employed as a seamstress until her retirement. Nettie and her husband, George Neufeld, moved from Laird, Saskatchewan, to Cloverdale, British Columbia, where they found employment with a vegetable farmer until they were able to purchase a farm of their own. Teresa, at an early age, found employment in a Saskatoon drug store and later followed other family members to the West Coast where she continued as clerk in a pharmacy. Lisa's husband, Jacob Unger, owned a grain farm near Laird, Saskatchewan, and Mary's husband, Bernhard Fast, was a school teacher in Saskatchewan. Hence Lisa and Mary were not as severely affected by the *Great Depression* as were their siblings. They remained in the province where they settled when first coming to Canada. Though personal interests and circumstances led the family members to a variety of vocations and locations, in the final analysis each and all were financially well rewarded for their labors and perseverance.

WAVE THREE COMPLEMENTS WAVE ONE AND TWO

Education

As was the case with Wave Two, The members of wave three had as their main priority the building of churches to practise their Mennonite faith and tradition, and schools for themselves and their children. The German-English Academy had heretofore had a very low student enrolment because the group that built that school in 1905 was a relatively small number compared to the influx of Conference Mennonites in the 1920s. Many of the latter had already obtained a secondary education in Russia and were anxious to learn the language of Canada and to obtain a Saskatchewan high school certificate. The German-English Academy was for them the ideal school in which to enrol as a student. Many, indeed, after receiving a Senior Matriculation certificate continued their education either at the Saskatoon Normal School (later called Teachers' College), or at the University of Saskatchewan.

The student body at the little red brick school house, known to most of us as G.E.A., grew to twice the former number within a few years and within the next two or three decades increased to four times its enrolment of 1925. With the steady increase in population together with the modern trends in education came the need for more classrooms as well as for offices, an auditorium, and so on. Thus as we read in Chapter VII, a resolution to build a new and much larger school was passed in March 1949. More details about the expansion of the building and services are given in Chapter VII. Suffice it to say that leadership in the completion of this project was given by members of each of the three Waves of emigrants from Russia to the Saskatchewan Valley.

Religion

In previous chapters we read of the construction of churches both by the members of Wave One and Wave

Two Mennonites. The former were the Bergthal and Old Colony Mennonites; the latter were the Conference Mennonites. After the arrival of the Mennonites in the 1920s, seven more Conference Mennonite churches were built in the Saskatchewan Valley. Up to this time there had been very few Conference Mennonites living in the Osler area. Their church services were held in a small school building. When in the 1920s a large number of immigrants bought land and settled in the Osler area, there was an immediate need for a larger place of worship. This led to the building of the Osler Mennonite Church in 1928. Garthland Church was also built in 1928 to serve the newly settled Mennonites in a mainly French district. During the *Great Depression* a large number of young and middle-age people, mainly from the Laird, Rosthern, and Waldheim areas, moved to Capasin where the government had opened up several sections of land as homesteads. They built their church in 1934. During the *Dirty Thirties*, as the *Great Depression* was often called, many young people, particularly from Wave Three, flocked to the city to look for employment. The spiritual need for these young people was met by the building of the first First Mennonite Church on Third Avenue in 1936. The Horse Lake Church, about six miles north of Duck Lake, was dedicated in 1941. In the village (dorp) of Hochfeld was a Bergthal Mennonite Church but the Conference Mennonites felt the need of building their own and did so in 1945. In Neuanlage there was a church where the more conservatives worshipped. They had landed in Manitoba in the 1870s and moved to the Saskatchewan Valley during the early part of the twentieth century. The Conference Church was built in 1946. Thus, wherever the Wave Three Mennonites settled they built places of worship, not only in the Saskatchewan Valley, but in many other areas of Saskatchewan and in the provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia.

Chapter IX

MENNONITE CONFERENCES, STATISTICS AND NAME DERIVATIONS

As mentioned in Chapter IV, the General Conference of Mennonite Congregations in Russia was founded November 17, 1882 at Halbstadt, Russia. When the 900 emigrants from Wave Two came to Canada in the 1890s they lost little time in getting their churches well organized. They felt the need for unity in order to preserve their heritage.

The Conference of Mennonites in Canada was organized in 1903 in Hochstadt, Manitoba, with J. Hoepfner as chairman. Nineteen people attended this conference. The theme was *Mennonite Relations With The Government*. The 86th Annual Sessions in 1988 saw between 3000 and 3500 in attendance. Just as this book goes to press, the 89th Annual Sessions, which were held in Saskatoon, have come to a close. On Sunday, July 7, 1991 the morning and evening sessions were held in the Centennial Auditorium. The main floor, the balconies, and the basement were filled to capacity with an attendance of between 3500 and 4000 people. In 1904 the Conference was held at Eigenheim, six miles west of Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Following are the names of the men who held the office of chairman during the years 1903-1924; that is prior to the arrival of Wave Three: J. Hoepfner, H.H. Ewert, J. Gerbrandt, and D. Toews.

The first Mennonite from the Saskatchewan Valley to serve as a foreign missionary was Reverend Henry M. Epp, son of grandfather Heinrich Epp. He and his wife, together with their four children, left for China on March 14, 1916 to serve in the Mission Field. Four more

children were born during their stay in China and one more was added to the family after their return in 1922.

Canadian Mennonite Conferences have been held annually ever since 1903; north American General Conferences, including Canada and the United States of America, are held every three years alternating between the various districts of the two countries. The first Mennonite World Conference (M.W.C.) was held in Basel, Switzerland, June 13-16, 1925. The meeting was small with only about 100 participants.

MWC ASSEMBLY LOCATIONS AND THEMES 1925-1990

<u>Year</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Theme</u>
1925	Basel	Commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the founding of Anabaptism
1930	Danzig	Mennonite World Relief Work, Mennonites in the U.S.S.R.
1936	Amsterdam	400th Anniversary of Menno Simon's Conversion and Baptism
1948	Goshen/ Newton	Brotherhood and Reconciliation
1952	Basel	The Church of Christ and her Commission
1957	Karlsruhe	The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the World
1962	Kitchener	The Lordship of Christ
1967	Amsterdam	The Witness of the Holy Spirit
1972	Curitiba	Jesus Christ Reconciles

1978	Wichita	The Kingdom of God in a Changing World
1984	Strasbourg	God's People Serve in Hope
1990	Winnipeg	Witnessing to Christ in Today's World

According to the *Mennonite Reporter* a crowd of 17,000 gathered on July 24, 1990 for the opening session of the 12th Mennonite World Conference held in Winnipeg: "Parity between North America/Europe and the two-thirds-world by 1992 or 1993 is anticipated and a million members by the end of the century" according to Paul Kraybill, executive secretary of Mennonite World Conference.

Worldwide membership has now reached 802, 900 Mennonites in 60 countries (1988) compared with 774,000 members in 57 countries in 1986. By continents, North America has 374,800 Mennonites, Africa has 145,400, Asia has 113,500, Australia has 400, Europe has 90,700, the Caribbean, Central and South America combined have 78,100, and Bahamas and Malawi are listed for the first time in the 1988 directory. Mennonite services are now offered in more than 100 languages. Today's Mennonites have been shaped by 100 cultural traditions. Ethnic definitions of Mennonites are now rapidly disappearing.

The figures given in the above paragraph refer to baptized members only and does not include children or such adults who associate themselves with the Mennonite church but have not been baptized.

NAME DERIVATIONS

When the early settlers arrived in what is today known as the Saskatchewan Valley, the places where towns, schools, and churches would be built or organized, needed to have names. Following in alphabetical order is a list of derivations of some of those names including the three major cities in the province.

1. Aberdeen - The name was selected to honor John Campbell Gordon, Marquis of Aberdeen, a British political leader who served as Governor General of Canada from 1893-1898.
2. Carlton - It takes its name from Carlton House, one of three Hudson's Bay Company posts by the same name. This post was built in 1810 on the North Saskatchewan river west of Duck Lake.
3. Danzig - This was a school with only children enrolled whose forebears had lived in Danzig, a German province. The local school board suggested this name.
4. Hepburn - When the railway came through this area, Gordon Hepburn donated 40 acres for a town site. The town was named in his honor.
5. Laird - When the North-West Territories were organized in 1876 as a separate administrative unit, David Laird was appointed the first Lieutenant-Governor. Later the town of Laird was named after him.
6. Langham - The town of Langham was given its name in 1905 by Canadian Northern officials to honor Mr. E. Langham, who was purchasing agent for the line at that time.
7. Mennon - So many German speaking Mennonites settled here in the 1890s that they called it Mennon after their leader Menno Simons.
8. Osler - Osler is named for Sir Edmond Osler, a railroad contractor who laid the steel through the townsite. He was a brother to the famous doctor, Sir William Osler.
9. Prince Albert - In 1866 Reverend Nesbitt travelled by

river with a party of settlers to where the city is now located. He named it as a tribute to the consort of Queen Victoria - Prince Albert.

10. Regina - This place was originally known as Pile of Bones but when in 1882 it was decided to move the capital of the north-West Territories to this location, the Governor-General, the Marquis of Lorne, christened it Regina in honor of Queen Victoria.
11. Rosenorter - This was a group of churches under one bishop. The Canadian Conference of Mennonites had its origin in the founding of the Rosenort Mennonite Church in 1891 in Saskatchewan. Until 1962 this constituted the largest Mennonite group in Canada. In 1639 the *Rosenorter Gemeinde* was organized in West Prussia. Descendants from that group chose to call the first Conference Mennonite Church in Canada by the same name.
12. Rosthern - The origin of the name of this town is unknown, but one story suggests that the name was derived from the numerous rose bushes in the area - roses and thorns. From Rose-Thorn it eventually was call Rosthern in 1894.
13. Saskatoon - The story is told that an Indian brought John Lake, leader of the temperance colony which established Saskatoon, a handful of native berries. The bearer called them saskatoons. Mr. Lake chose this as the name of the settlement he was founding in 1882.
14. Waldheim - When a railway was built through this area and a station was erected, the German speaking settlers thought that since their new home was such a wooded area it should be called Waldheim. *Wald* is the German word for *forest* and *Heim* means *home*.
15. Warman - This was named by the Canadian Northern

Railway officials for Cy Warman, a British journalist who followed the contractors when they were building this railway in 1905. This was, however, not the first railway through this area. The first railway through the Valley from Regina to Prince Albert was completed October 22, 1890.

HISTORICAL EVENTS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Menno Simons | 1496-1561 |
| 2. Beginning of Anabaptists
in Switzerland | 1525 |
| 3. Beginning of Anabaptist
persecution in Holland | 1532 |
| 4. Emigration of Anabaptists
to Prussia | 1535 |
| 5. Menno Simons' Conversion | 1536 |
| 6. Birth of Mennonitism in Holland | 1536 |
| 7. Danzig Farmers' Insurance
Company | 1622 |
| 8. Emigration of Mennonites
to Russia | 1788 |
| 9. First Organ in Mennonite
Churches | 1788 |
| 10. Founding of Mennonite <i>Zentral
Schule</i> (Secondary School) | 1820 |
| 11. Wave One Emigration of Mennonites
to Canada | 1873 |

12. Forestry Services in Russia Inaugurated	1880
13. First Conference of Mennonite Congregations in Russia	1882
14. East-West Canadian Pacific Railway	1885
15. First Public School in Saskatoon	1888
16. Saskatchewan Railway - Regina - Saskatoon - Rosthern - Prince Albert	1890
17. Wave Two Mennonite Emigration to Canada	1891
18. Epp family arrives in Canada	1891
19. Fast family arrives in Canada	1892
20. Mennonite Waisenamt (Insurance Company) Waldheim	1894
21. First Rosenort Church in Canada Eigenheim near Rosthern	1896
22. Jacob Fast Homestead Application	1897
23. Carmen School Opened	1897
24. Conference of Mennonites in Canada Organized	1903
25. Rosthern Mennonite Church Built	1903
26. Province of Saskatchewan Organized	1905
27. German-English Academy Opened	1905

28. Danzig School Opened	1906
29. Conference Churches Built in Laird, Aberdeen, Tiefengrund, Waldheim	1910
30. Outbreak of World War I	1914
31. Russian Revolution	1917
32. Compulsory Education in Saskatchewan	1923
33. Wave Three - First Contingent of Mennonites to leave Russia	1923
34. First World Conference of Mennonites	1925
35. Thiessen Family arrives in Canada	1925
36. First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon	1936
37. The Great Depression	1929-1939
38. Outbreak of World War II	1939
39. Thiessen Family moves to British Columbia	1942
40. Larger School Unit Act of Saskatchewan	1945
41. First English Service in Aberdeen Mennonite Church	1946

Chapter X

BERNHARD AND MARY (THIESSEN) FAST FAMILY

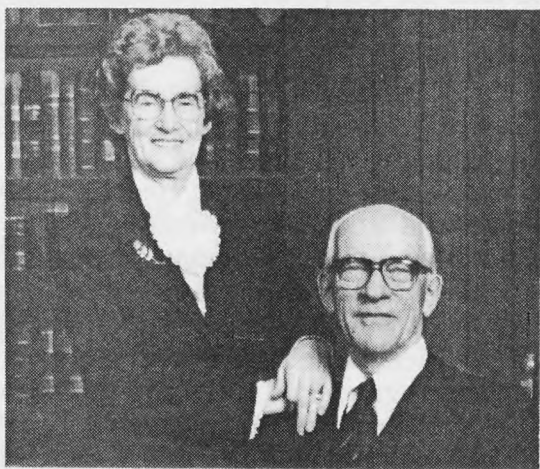
The historical background of both the Fast and the Thiessen families has been dealt with in previous chapters. Therefore, we shall make observations on these families only as it relates directly to the Bernhard and Mary Fast family.

Mary Thiessen had emigrated from the USSR to Canada at the age of ten years; Bernhard Fast was born at Laird, Saskatchewan in 1910. Mary received her formal elementary and high school education in the following schools: Laird, Ebenfeld, Willow Lake, Embury, and Government Correspondence Courses. Bernhard attended Danzig and Carmen elementary schools near Waldheim, Saskatchewan, the German-English Academy, Rosthern, Saskatchewan, teacher training at the Saskatoon Normal School, and later the University of Saskatchewan to obtain the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Education, and Bachelor of Theology degrees.

It was in 1932 while the Thiessen family farmed near Mennon, Saskatchewan and Bernhard taught at Steele School near Hepburn that Bernhard and Mary met and became intimate friends. They met frequently both in the Thiessen home and at Sunday evening Young Peoples' Christian Endeavors, Choir programs, worship services, and so on. Both Bernhard and Mary were baptized on confession of faith by the Reverend Gerhard Buhler in Waldheim Zoar Mennonite Church and were accepted as members of that congregation. Bernhard joined the church in June 1930; Mary in June 1934. On July 17, 1934 they joined in holy matrimony in the Laird Mennonite Conference Church with Reverend Jacob R. Schmidt officiating, assisted by Reverend John L. Zacharias. This

was during the *Great Depression* 1929-1939, frequently known as the *Dirty Thirties*.

At that time Bernhard was employed by the Gruenthal School Board, teaching the senior elementary grades in a two-room country school. The period of the *Great Depression* has been discussed in Chapter VIII of this book, therefore, only a few things which directly affected the young married couple will be described here. The Government school grant in those days was \$200.00 per classroom per year. The balance of what it would cost to run the school should be paid by the farmers who had little or no crop and wheat sold at twenty-five cents a bushel. How could the ratepayers afford to pay a teacher? Indeed, some were paid as little as \$200.00 a year and in many cases the greater part of that was in promissory notes. Bernhard Fast, during the first two years of their marriage received a salary of \$550.00 per year plus the use of a teacherage and fuel in exchange for doing the janitorial work in the school. The teacherage consisted of a kitchen, a living room, a small bedroom, and a pantry. They were, indeed, fortunate, compared to most newly-weds at that time, to have those modern amenities.



Bernhard and Mary (Thiessen) Fast

It was customary in those days that the bride receive a cow from her parents. This cow, Bertha, supplied the Fasts with milk, cream and butter, and the surplus butter was sold to Saskatoon residents at twenty-five cents a pound. A dozen laying hens, which were kept on the school grounds, supplied the family's eggs; the extras were taken to town where they were given in trade for groceries. In late fall neighbors helped to butcher their six-month old calf and 250 pound hog. There was little money and few if any luxuries. However, the Fasts were really never desperate for a livelihood as so many others were.

It was under these circumstances and conditions that they were blessed with three fine children: Raymond Garry, Lindsay Wayne, and Dolores Joan, within a little over four years of marriage. Mary was not only an excellent cook and good homemaker for the children, she also knew how to make little money and food go a long way - a trait which was most fortunate during these meager years.

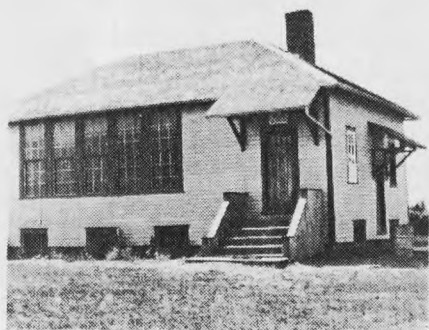
In 1936 Bernhard was hired by the Lilly School Board near Aberdeen, Saskatchewan to teach in a one-room school for the huge salary of \$700.00 per year plus teacherage and fuel in exchange for janitorial services. It was here that the children grew up and received their elementary as well as part of their secondary education. The family spent nineteen years at this school. Needless to say, during this period of time many things in the field of education changed. Mary and Bernhard joined the Aberdeen Mennonite Church where he was elected and ordained as lay minister in 1945, and Mary was active as president of the Ladies Aid, as Sunday School teacher, and with the Christian Endeavor among other things. It was in this church that the three children were dedicated and attended Sunday School and Worship Service. All three children: Raymond, Lindsay, and Dolores attended the Rosthern Junior College for part of their secondary education.

In 1955 the family moved to Saskatoon where Bernhard taught school and served churches; Mary was active in church organizations and it is worthy of note that she

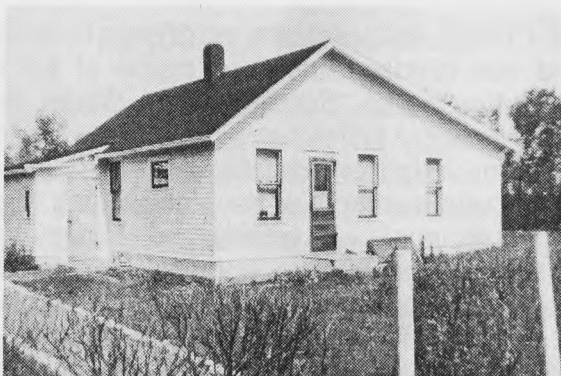
served as a coordinator of Mennonite Central Committee (M.C.C.) Bazaars for Saskatoon and outlying areas for a period of ten years. At the same time she served the family as a homemaker.



The students of Lilly School 1944



One-room school



Lilly School Teacherage
The home of Bernhard and Mary Fast for 19 years.

RAYMOND GARRY FAST

After attending a year (1954-1955) at Teachers' College, Raymond taught school for a few years and then returned to the University of Saskatchewan where he obtained his Bachelor of Education degree. He later earned a Master of Education degree from the University of Alberta. After serving as principal in a few schools he was appointed Superintendent of Schools in Alberta. In 1966 he and his family moved to Pennsylvania, U.S.A. for two years while he studied at the Pennsylvania State University to obtain his Doctor of Philosophy degree in school administration. He was then employed by the Alberta Department of Education as Assistant Deputy Minister of Education and Chief Administrator of Red Deer College. On January 1, 1974 he accepted the position of Director of Education (Chief Executive Officer) of the Saskatoon Public School System, a position he has held since that time.

In 1960 Raymond married Helen Marion Lane who is a registered nurse and was employed at the Saskatoon City Hospital at the time. As Raymond's interests, studies, and engagements led them to various locations, she found that her services were welcomed and appreciated wherever they made their home. In later years she attended Robertson's

Secretarial College and earned a certificate in accounting.

Raymond was baptized upon confession of his faith, in First Mennonite Church, Saskatoon in 1958 by Reverend Jacob J. Thiessen; Helen was baptized in Rosthern Mennonite Church by Reverend Jacob C. Schmidt in 1954. They are presently members of the Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. Raymond and Helen have two children: Lori-Lynn Pamela obtained her Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Saskatchewan in 1988 and is presently employed as a teacher in Regina, Saskatchewan. She was baptized in Nutana Park Mennonite Church by Reverend Lloyd Ratzlaff in 1983. On September 7, 1991 Lori married Bradley Thomas Armstrong who holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Rural and Urban Development from the University of Saskatchewan. He is currently a Rural Municipal Planner for the Balgoni Municipality adjacent to Regina, Saskatchewan. Raymond Garry Jr. graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree, majoring in Economics and Finance, from the University of Saskatchewan in May of 1989. He is presently employed in Japan teaching English and studying the Japanese language. Raymond Garry Jr. was baptized in the Nutana Park Mennonite Church in 1988 by Reverend Vern Ratzlaff and is a member of that congregation in Saskatoon.



Raymond, Helen, Lori and Garry Fast

LINDSAY WAYNE FAST

After completing Grade XII, Lindsay studied a year at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, then worked a year at the Saskatchewan Hospital in Battleford, followed by a year of studies at Saskatoon Teachers' College. The next few years he taught school and then returned to Saskatoon to complete his Bachelor of Education degree, after which he was employed by the Saskatoon Public Board of Education as a collegiate teacher. A few years later he completed his Master of Education degree and he is presently principal of Marion M. Graham Collegiate Institute in Saskatoon. Lindsay was baptized on confession of faith in Rosthern Mennonite Church by Reverend Jacob C. Schmidt in 1955. On March 5, 1960 he joined in holy matrimony with Joan Louise Inglis. Joan, after teaching a number of years, continued her education at the University of Saskatchewan and was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Education. She is presently employed by the Saskatoon Public Board of Education as a teacher in special education for the hearing impaired. They are members of Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon.

Their marriage is blessed with four children: Sharon Elaine, Graham Bradley, Sandra Jane (born May 12, 1966 and died in infancy), and Shaun Douglas. After having completed three years of education at the University of Saskatchewan, Sharon married Harish Brahmabhatt on July 23, 1983. Their present home is in Los Angeles, California, where Harish is employed as an accountant with a major business firm, and Sharon, besides being a homemaker, teaches part-time in a private Christian school. Sharon was baptized in June 1983 by Reverend Lloyd Ratzlaff and was accepted into the membership of Nutana Park Mennonite Church in Saskatoon.

Graham has completed six years of study at the University of Saskatchewan, received his Physiotherapy degree in 1989, and is presently employed as a physiotherapist in Edmonton, Alberta. He was baptized in June 1983 by Reverend Lloyd Ratzlaff and became a

member of Nutana Park Mennonite Church. On December 19, 1987 Graham married Joanne Rose Duret who holds a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in sociology and is employed as a Federal Parole Officer in Edmonton, Alberta. Shaun, at home with his parents, graduated with Senior Matriculation in June 1990 from Aden Bowman Collegiate Institute. He is a student at the University of Saskatchewan and is a trombonist in four different bands.



Lindsay and Joan Fast with family

DOLORES JOAN FAST

After graduating from high school, Dolores was employed as teller in a bank for one year, after which she attended Saskatoon Teachers' College for a year. After teaching several years she returned to the University of Saskatchewan to complete her Bachelor of Education degree. She was then employed by the Saskatoon Public Board of Education for several years as a teacher and then promoted to primary consultant. A few years later she attended the University of Alberta where she was awarded the Master of Education degree. Dolores with her husband David and their children live in Edmonton where she holds the position of a school psychologist and teacher.

Dolores was baptized on confession of faith in 1958 by

Reverend Jacob J. Thiessen in the First Mennonite Church in Saskatoon. On July 19, 1969 Dolores joined in holy matrimony with David Jeffares who was a school principal holding a Bachelor of Education degree at that time. He continued his education at the University of Alberta and obtained first a Master of Education degree and a few years later, convocated with a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Curriculum Development. For a number of years David was employed by the Alberta Department of Education as Director of Early Childhood Education; then he became Coordinating Director - Student Appeals and Attendance Secretariat. At present he is the Senior Manager in the Alberta Ministry of Education.

Dolores and David are members of the First Mennonite Church in Edmonton, Alberta. They have two children: Heather Dolores and Timothy David. Heather graduated from Rosthern Junior College in June 1989 and has completed two years at the University of Alberta at the time of this writing (1991). She lives at home with her parents. Timothy, an avid golfer and active in many sports, has just completed Grade XI in the Rosthern Junior College.



Picture of Dolores and family

Chapter XI

GENEALOGY

This Genealogy includes only people closely related to Bernhard and Mary (Thiessen) Fast.

GENERATION I

Grandparents of Bernhard and Mary Fast

GENERATION II

Parents and their Brothers and Sisters

GENERATION III

Brothers and Sisters of Bernhard and Mary

GENERATION IV

Children, Nephews and Nieces of Bernhard and Mary

GENERATION V

Grandchildren of Bernhard and Mary

GENERATION VI

Great-Grandchildren of Bernhard and Mary Fast

GENERATION I

1. Johann Fast = Maria Krahn
B. June 8, 1852 B. September 15, 1848
D. 1919 D. January 23, 1916
M. 1871
2. Heinrich Epp = Margaretha Rempel
B. March 13, 1885 B. January 4, 1857
D. September 25, 1906 D. August, 1937
M. 1876
3. Johann Begen = Aganetha Block
B. January 25, 1814 B. November 12, 1830
D. February 14, 1895 D. February 3, 1911
M. November 7, 1863
4. Heinrich Thiessen Sr. = Susannah Reimer
B. Dates unknown B. Dates unknown
D. D.
M.

GENERATION II

Children of Johann Fast and Maria Krahn

1. Johann Fast =Katherina Loepky
B. May 1, 1872 B. August 9, 1879
D. April, 1947 D. September 25, 1969
2. Jacob Fast =Helena Epp
B. February 28, 1874 B. October 25, 1878
D. August 4, 1939 D. April 15, 1962
M. December 14, 1897
3. Cornelius Fast =Anna Klassen
B. December 31, 1875 B.
D. December, 1942 D. December 1918

4. Heinrich Fast =Chorlina
B. December 4, 1877 B.
D. 1932 D.
5. Peter Fast =Helena Klassen
B. April 6, 1880 B. March 20, 1890
D. May 7, 1960 D. November 13, 1964
6. Isaac Fast
B. February 12, 1882
D. December 19, 1882
7. Isaac Fast =Edith Unrau
B. July 22, 1884 B.
D. June, 1964 D.
8. Gerhard Fast =Agatha Dueck
B. February 6, 1887 B. August 1, 1895
D. May 19, 1960 D. August 23, 1944
9. Alexander Fast =Friesen
B. April 1, 1890 B.
D. May, 1960 D.

Children of Heinrich Epp and Margaretha Rempel

1. Maria Epp =Heinrich Friesen
B. September 3, 1877 B. May 11, 1875
D. August 4, 1904 D. July 21, 1931
2. Helena Epp =Jacob Fast
B. October 25, 1878 B. February 28, 1874
D. April 15, 1962 D. August 4, 1939
M. December 14, 1897
3. Margaretha Epp =Abram Ens
B. June 26, 1881 B. Unknown
D. July, 1943 D.

4. Katherina Epp =Peter J. Epp
B. July 18, 1883 B. November 7, 1880
D. March 22, 1932 D. August 4, 1975
5. Heinrich Epp =Aganetha Gossen
B. February 15, 1885 B. January 14, 1890
D. September, 1942 D. 1965
6. Peter M. Epp =Katherina Ens
B. December 22, 1886 B. June 15, 1886
D. December 25, 1943 D. August 18, 1945
7. Jacob M. Epp =Anna Ens
B. Mary 24, 1889 B. October 7, 1891
D. March 15, 1963 D. May 27, 1981
8. David M. Epp =Christina Giesbrecht
B. September 3, 1893 B. September 13, 1895
D. August 19, 1957 D. February 19, 1951
9. Agatha Epp =Heinrich Heppner
B. February 25, 1896 B. December 10, 1895
D. June 8, 1972 D. March 2, 1991
10. Johann M. Epp =Elsie Hoffer
B. September 27, 1897 B. March 9, 1902
D. February 23, 1978 D.

Children of Johann Bergen and Aganetha Block

1. Johann Bergen
B. September 15, 1864
D. September 20, 1864
2. Peter Bergen
B. September 18, 1865
D. October 14, 1865

3. Aganetha Bergen =Heinrich Penner
 B. December 9, 1869 B. October 8, 1866
 D. 1944 D. March 5, 1920
 M. November 1, 1888
4. Helena Bergen =Heinrich Thiessen
 B. December 17, 1872 B. November 14, 1875
 D. November 25, 1955 D. November 23, 1917
 M. September 8, 1896

Children of Heinrich Thiessen Sr. and Susannah Reimer

1. Heinrich Thiessen Jr. =Helena Bergen
 B. November 14, 1875 B. December 17, 1872
 D. November 23, 1917 D. November 25, 1955
 M. September 8, 1896
2. Jacob Thiessen
 The only record available of
 Jacob Thiessen is that he was
 married and had two children.
 - a. A son, Jacob Thiessen
 - b. A daughter, Anna Thiessen,
 who disappeared during the
 Russian Revolution in 1917.

GENERATION III

Children of Jacob Fast and Helena Epp

1. John Fast =Susan Hook
 B. December 1, 1898 B. December 21, 1906
 D. February 21, 1985 D. November 16, 1945
 M. August 15, 1926

- M. November 23, 1969 =Annie Unger
 B. February 18, 1899
 D. March 6, 1986
2. Henry Fast =Mary Kitzel
 B. July 14, 1900 B. March 30, 1906
 D. March 23, 1961 D.
 M. Mary 9, 1925
3. Helen Fast =Jacob Ens
 B. September 9, 1901 B. January 8, 1897
 D. April 3, 1971 D. March 30, 1973
 M. July 15, 1924
4. Jacob Fast =Hazel Dobson
 B. November 27, 1902 B. Date unknown
 D. Date unknown D.
 M. March 16, 1931
5. Mary Fast =Isaac Ens
 B. September 23, 1904 B. January 3, 1904
 D. January 6, 1969 D. November 4, 1978
 M. July 26, 1927
6. Erwin Fast =Anna Regier
 B. December 8, 1905 B. March 12, 1921
 D. April 29, 1987 D.
 M. September 29, 1940
7. Albert Fast =Helen Strierner
 B. August 12, 1907 B. December 9, 1915
 D. July 5, 1977 D.
 M. October 21, 1934
8. Willie Fast
 B. May 6, 1909
 D. May 5, 1913

- | | |
|--|--|
| 9. Bernhard Fast
B. October 5, 1910
D.
M. July 17, 1934 | =Mary Thiessen
B. June 25, 1915
D. |
| 10. Margrete Fast
B. May 10, 1912
D.
M. July 10, 1934 | =Abram Friesen
B. May 20, 1901
D. March 23, 1991 |
| 11. Edward Fast
B. September 19, 1913
D. Stillborn | |
| 12. Armin Fast
B. October 7, 1914
D.
M. October 20, 1944 | =Tina Epp
B. July 3, 1925
D. |
| 13. Harvey Isaac Fast
B. December 5, 1916
D. February 20, 1971
M. August 26, 1944 | =Alice Pearce
B. August 20, 1921
D. January 18, 1988 |
| 14. Olga Fast
B. April 22, 1919
D.
M. July 7, 1943 | =Verner Funk
B. January 13, 1920
D. |
| 15. Dora Fast
B. February 1921
D. | |

Generation III

Thiessen - Bergen Family

Children of Heinrich Thiessen and Helena Bergen

1. Henry Thiessen
B. March 14, 1897
D. April 6, 1984
2. Nettie Thiessen =George Neufeld
B. June 15, 1898 B. March 21, 1903
D. March 10, 1981 D. January 12, 1982
M. November 12, 1932
3. John Thiessen =Mrs. H. Smith, nee
B. March 1, 1900 Ada Towle
D. June 12, 1987 B. March 9, 1900
M. Mary 12, 1966 D. February 26, 1987
4. Jacob Thiessen
B. January 3, 1902
D. September 18, 1918
5. Helena Thiessen =Abram Wiebe
B. June 25, 1904 B. 1888
D. August 8, 1989 D. March 20, 1938
M. September 20, 1923
6. Tina Thiessen =William Abbott
B. Mary 16, 1906 B. June 18, 1905
D. September 12, 1978 D. February 25, 1991
M. October 5, 1923
7. Lisa (Lizzie) Thiessen =Jacob Unger
B. March 4, 1908 B. November 27, 1902
D. D. February 6, 1985
M. June 15, 1926

8. Peter Thiessen
B. March 27, 1910
D. June 18, 1963
9. David Thiessen =Audrey Verle Burns
B. August 24, 1912 B. November 29, 1918
D. D.
M. July, 1942
10. Mary Thiessen =Bernhard Fast
B. June 25, 1915 B. October 5, 1910
D. D.
M. July 17, 1934
11. Teresa Thiessen =Leslie Lackey
B. May 16, 1920
(adopted) B. 1916
D. March 27, 1974 D.
M. 1951

Children of Aganetha Bergen and Heinrich Penner

1. Aganetha Penner =Gerhard Dueck
B. August 9, 1890 B. no records
D. 1982 D. available
M. September 4, 1911
2. Maria Penner =Abram Loewen
B. December 27, 1890 B. no records
D. no records available available
M. October 9, 1911
3. Helena Penner =Abram Mantler
B. March 17, 1892 B. no records
D. 1981 D. available
M. June 27, 1910

4. Johann Penner =no records
 B. November 18, 1893 available
 D.
 M. January 5, 1921
5. Heinrich Penner =no records
 B. Sepetmber 6, 1895 available
 D. no records available
6. Katharina Penner =Peter Dueck
 B. August 24, 1897 B. unknown
 D. unknown D. unknown
 M. unknown
7. Anna Penner
 B. November 20, 1899
 D. April 16, 1902
8. Anna Penner
 B. February 8, 1903
 D. unknown

GENERATION IV

Fast Family

Children of John Fast and Susan Hook

1. Charlotte Fast =Henry Voth
 B. May 12, 1927 B. November 26, 1904
 D. D. July 18, 1990
 M. May 6, 1962
2. Victor Fast =Jane Funk
 B. August 15, 1928 B. July 5, 1931
 D. D.
 M. September 20, 1949

- | | |
|--|--|
| 3. Clarence Fast
B. October 10, 1929
D.
M. August 8, 1964 | =Helen Koop
B. September
D. |
| 4. Johanna Fast
B. September 8, 1932
D.
M. October 16, 1948

M. April 8, 1977 | =Wilmer Epp
B. December 25, 1926
D. August 13, 1974

=Erdman Nikkel
B. October 13, 1925
D. |
| 5. Jacob Julius Fast
B. November 4, 1934
D.
M. October 31, 1958 | =Florence Shannon
B. November 31, 1932
D. |
| 6. Lawrence Fast
B. July, 1943
D. July, 1943 | |

Children of Henry Fast and Mary Kitzel

1. Joyce Rose Fast = George McDonald
B. July 18, 1929 D. December 13, 1929
D. D. April 9, 1966
M. 1952
2. Eldred Lorne Fast = Eileen Mabel Friesen
B. November 29, 1932 B. November 9, 1932
D. D.
M. April, 1952

3. Ruth Eveline Fast =Rudolph Friesen
 B. December 9, 1936 B. October 13, 1935
 D. D.
 M. April 26, 1959
4. Ronald Jerry Fast =Diana Aebig
 B. April 9, 1943 B. August 20, 1945
 D.
 M. November 16, 1963

Children of Helen Fast and Jacob Ens

1. Edwin Ens =Margaret Gamble
 B. May 27, 1925 B. January 15, 1928
 D. D. unknown
 M. September 2, 1944
 M. 1961 =unknown (June ?)
 B. June 17, unknown
2. Willie G. Ens =Mary Letkeman
 B. September 18, 1926 B. February 25, 1930
 D. D.
 M. April 14, 1951
3. Orval Ens =Martha Kreiter
 B. January 30, 1928 B. January 6, 1922
 D. D.
 M. May 7, 1950
4. Ruby Ens =Arthur Adrian
 B. August 29, 1929 B. Mary 17, 1926
 D. D.
 M. October 19, 1952

5. Dennis Ens =Anne Hamm
 B. March 11, 1933 B. April 22, unknown
 D. D.
 M. September 11, 1954
6. Emery Ens =Mary Harder
 B. December 20, 1935 B. March 14, 1937
 D. D.
 M. October 6, 1961
7. Amy Ens =Peter Loewen
 B. August 10, 1942 B. October 30, 1935
 D. D.
 M. July 16, 1966
8. Mavis Ens =Patrick Schaefer
 B. July 24, 1949 B. August 22, 1948
 D. D.
 M. July 11, 1970

Children of Jacob Fast and Hazel Dobson

1. Maxine Fast =Leonard Hinz
 B. September 25, 1931 B. January 7, 1930
 D. D.
 M. August, 1949

Children of Mary Fast and Isaac Ens

1. Erma Ens =Peter Heppner
 B. November 1, 1928 B. January 6, 1923
 D. D.
 M. May 29, 1949

2. Elmer Ens =Gladys Irene Zeliznik
B. November 3, 1930 B. unknown
D. D.
M. unknown
3. Harold Ens =Eva Luschyk
B. June 18, 1934 B. November 8, 1937
D. D.
M. September 26, 1959
4. Walter Ens =Marlene Glenice Miller
B. March 1, 1936 B. December 12, 1937
D. D.
M. August 15, 1961
5. Lillian Ruth Ens =Dick Froese
B. November 12, 1940 B. December 8, 1939
D. D.
M. June 30, 1965
6. Wilmer Edwell Ens =Diane Faith Austring
B. June 22, 1944 B. February 9, 1942
D. D.
M. May 21, 1966
7. Edna Ens =Lavern Friesen
B. February 14, 1948 B. November 23, 1944
D. D.
M. August 29, 1969

Children of Erwin Fast and Anna Regier

1. Kenneth James Fast =Gertrude K. Bergen
B. August 19, 1941 B. August 9, 1934
D. D.
M. April 3, 1964

2. Harvey David Fast =Rita Ann Forsyth
 B. November 4, 1942 B. December 9, 1945
 D. D.
 M. March 23, 1967
3. Merne Wayne Fast =Susan Boschman
 B. February 2, 1944 B. August 22, 1945
 D. D.
 M. October 26, 1963
4. Marlene May Fast =Keith Duncan Sinclair
 B. May 19, 1945 B. November 30, 1940
 D. D.
 M. May 2, 1964
5. Norman Fast =Patricia Hough
 B. October 9, 1950 B. April 2, 1949
 D. D.
 M. October 12, 1968
6. Connie Ann Fast =Colin Mohr
 B. August 28, 1952 B. March 24, 1947
 D. D.
 M. November 17, 1978

Children of Albert Fast and Helen Striemer

1. Marjorie Eileen Fast =Peter Daniel Teichroeb
 B. August 9, 1935 B. August 3, 1929
 D. D.
 M. July 25, 1954
2. Helen Ann Fast =Charles Edward Postle
 B. August 4, 1939 B. no records
 D. D. available
 M. September 7, 1957

- M. August 3, 1975 =Kenneth Fruin
- M. unknown =Efsthathios Dimopoulos
B. August 31, 1930
D.
3. Richard Dale Fast =Barbara K. Hamilton
B. September 25, 1943 B. May 27, 1950
D. D.
M. August 15, 1969
4. Roger Fast =Shirley Larson
B. February 10, 1948 B. January 8, 1949
D. D.
M. August 10, 1968

Children of Bernhard Fast and Mary Thiessen

1. Raymond Garry Fast =Helen Marion Lane
B. January 17, 1936 B. October 25, 1936
D. D.
M. September 10, 1960
2. Lindsay Wayne Fast =Joan Louise Inglis
B. October 9, 1937 B. January 12, 1939
D. D.
M. March 5, 1960
3. Dolores Joan Fast =David Jeffares
B. September 13, 1938 B. March 14, 1935
D. D.
M. July 19, 1969

Children of Margrete Fast and Abram Friesen

1. Elvira Avis Friesen =John Sawatsky
B. April 25, 1935 B. October 31, 1927
D. D.
M. December 29, 1956
2. Leslie Marvin Friesen =Lydia Epp
B. August 20, 1936 B. December 21, 1938
D. D.
M. June 25, 1960
3. Norma Muriel Friesen
B. July 22, 1939
D. April 3, 1941
4. Marilyn Faith Friesen =Robert Miller
B. February 18, 1942 B. March 3, 1941
D. D.
M. August 29, 1964
5. Adeline Margaret Friesen =Philip Patrick
B. February 6, 1943 B. April 15, 1937
D. D.
M. August 6, 1966
6. Ivan Robert Friesen =Linda Schellenberg
B. March 15, 1946 B. April 7, 1949
D. D.
M. September 4, 1971
7. Sandra Corinne Friesen =Richard Gordon Hendy
B. August 5, 1954 B. June 30, 1948
D. D.
M. August 30, 1975

Children of Armin Fast and Tina Epp

1. Jean Marie Fast =Walter Ronald Smetschka
 B. August 17, 1945 B. September 7, 1942
 D. D.
 M. April 19, 1964
2. Terance Arthur Fast =Adelene Agatha Regehr
 B. July 13, 1947 B. June 10, 1947
 D. D.
 M. June 30, 1967
3. Charles Armin Fast =Alynn Michelle Voje
 B. March 20, 1952 B. August 6, 1954
 D. D.
 M. April 17, 1980
4. Robert Anthony Fast
 B. November 25, 1956
 D. May 5, 1974

Children of Harvey Isaac Fast and Alice Mary Pearce

1. Gail-Ann Fast =Wayne James Warnicka
 B. October 18, 1947 B. May 8, 1945
 D. D.
 M. July 19, 1975
2. Gerald Clarence Fast =Anne Peace
 B. May 20, 1950 B. September 13, 1951
 D. D.
 M. June, 1974
3. Corinne Dawn Fast
 B. November, 1961
 D.

Children of Olga Fast and Verner Funk

1. Marvin Ross Funk =Heather Ann Mitchell
B. July 28, 1944 B. September 12, 1947
D. D.
M. December 3, 1966
2. Audrey Jean Funk =Gavin Phillip Wood
B. July 5, 1948 B. January 28, 1944
D. D.
M. August 8, 1970
3. John Eldon Funk =Donna Jean Grag
B. October 23, 1949 B. November 12, 1956
D. D.
M. April 24, 1976

GENERATION IV

Thiessen Family

Children of Nettie Thiessen and George Neufeld

1. Elsie Neufeld =Russell Giberson
B. May 17, 1933 B. September 12, 1926
D. D.
M. October 28, 1950
2. Edward Neufeld =Delight
B. December 17, 1937 B. 1935
D. D.
M. 1960

Children of Helena Thiessen and Abram Wiebe

1. Peter Wiebe =Marushka Ustjugowa
 B. March 10, 1926 B. May 15, 1927
 D. D.
 M. 1957
2. Abram Wiebe =Raiesza Ustjugowa
 B. September 20, 1927 B. May 27, 1932
 D. D.
 M. 1955
3. Heinrich Wiebe =Maria Nicholaewna
 B. May 1, 1929 B. February 24, 1930
 D. D.
 M. January 1, 1964
4. Jacob Wiebe =Nela Roschdestwenskaja
 B. February 22, 1931 B. May 26, 1934
 D. D.
 M. 1958
5. David Wiebe =Paula Gaer
 B. June 24, 1935 B. January 25, 1939
 D. D.
 M. 1957
6. Hans Wiebe =Olga Schpaet
 B. May 22, 1938 February 6, 1938
 D. D.
 M. February 22, 1959

Children of Lisa (Lizzie) Thiessen and Jacob Unger

1. Betty Georgina Unger =Harvey Harder
 B. March 16, 1927 B. November 12, 1925
 D. D. September 20, 1989
 M. January 12, 1946

2. Gordon Dale Unger =Geraldine Godlin
B. March 10, 1931 B. September, 1935
D. D.
M. April 12, 1955

Children of David Thiessen and Audrey Burns

1. Dorell Forest Thiessen =Carolle Howe
B. March 12, 1943 B. unknown
D. February 2, 1976 D. February 2, 1976
M. August 22, 1964
2. Burns David Thiessen =Pauline Solon
B. May 14, 1945 B. unknown
D. D.
M. December 4, 1965
3. Lorrell Eloise Thiessen =Nicholas Baptistic
B. August 31, 1952 B. unknown
D. D.
M. unknown
4. Bonnie Adele Thiessen =Melville Hunter
B. May 7, 1955 B. unknown
D. D.
M. September 2, 1972

Children of Mary Thiessen and Bernhard Fast

1. Raymond Garry Fast =Helen Marion Lane
B. January 17, 1936 B. October 25, 1936
D. D.
M. September 10, 1960

2. Lindsay Wayne Fast =Joan Louise Inglis
 B. October 9, 1937 B. January 12, 1939
 D. D.
 M. March 5, 1960
3. Dolores Joan Fast =David Jeffares
 B. September 13, 1938 B. March 14, 1935
 D. D.
 M. July 19, 1969

GENERATION V

The descendants of Bernhard and Mary (Thiessen) Fast only

Children of Raymond Garry Fast and Helen Marion Lane

1. Lori-Lynn Pamela =Bradley Thomas
 Fast Armstrong
 B. December 8, 1965 B. February 4, 1966
 D. D.
 M. September 7, 1991
2. Raymond Garry Fast Jr.
 B. January 4, 1968
 D.

Children of Lindsay Wayne Fast and Joan Louise Inglis

1. Sharon Elaine Fast =Harish Brahmabhatt
 B. August 9, 1960 B. August 24, 1957
 D. D.
 M. July 23, 1983

2. Graham Bradley Fast =Joanne Rose Duret
 B. April 25, 1964 B. May 14, 1965
 D. D.
 M. December 19, 1987
3. Sandra Jane Fast
 B. May 12, 1966
 D. Stillborn
4. Shaun Douglas Fast
 B. May 31, 1972
 D.

Children of Dolores Joan Fast and David Jeffares

1. Heather Dolores Jeffares
 B. September 13, 1971
 D.
2. Timothy David Jeffares
 B. October 25, 1974
 D.

GENERATION VI

Children of Sharon Elaine Fast and Harish Brahmbhatt

1. Sanjay Harish Brahmbhatt
 B. November 1, 1984
 D.
2. Kamla Joan Brahmbhatt
 B. April 24, 1987
 D.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Epp, Frank H., *Education with a Plus*, 1975
- Epp, Frank H., *Mennonites in Canada*, 1974
- Gerbrandt, H.J. and Epp, H.H.,
Conference Year Book, 1973
- Guenter, Jacob G., *Men of Steele*, 1981
- Krahn, Cornelius, *Menno Simons*, 1937
- Mennonite Heritage (Periodical), 1988
- Mennonite Report (Periodical), 1988
- Rempel, John G., *Die Rosenorter Gemeinde in
Saskatchewan*, 1950
- Rosthern History, *New Furrows and Old*
- Russel, Peter, *What's in a Name?*, 1972
- Schreiber, William, *The Fate of the Prussian
Mennonites*, 1955
- Smith, Henry C., *The Story of the Mennonites*, 1957

EPILOGUE

FAREWELL

When I lie where shades of darkness
Shall no more assail mine eyes,
Nor the rain make lamentation
When the wind sighs;
How will fare the world whose wonder
Was the very proof of me?
Memory fades, must the remembered
Perishing be?

Oh, when this my dust surrenders
Hand, foot, lip, to dust again,
May these loved and loving faces
Please other men!
May the rusting harvest hedgerow
Still the Traveller's Joy entwine,
And as happy children gather
Posies once mine.

Look your last on all things lovely,
Every hour. Let no night
Seal thy sense in deathly slumber
Till to delight
Thou hast paid thy utmost blessing;
Since that all things thou would'st praise
Beauty took from those who loved them
In other days.

Walter De La Mare



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author of this four hundred fifty year history of the FAST-THIESSEN family is a retired school principal and minister living with his wife in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He was born in Laird, Saskatchewan, the son of immigrants of the second wave which he describes in this book. After graduating from the German-English Academy in 1926 he took his early teacher training at the Saskatoon Normal School and later graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with B.A., B. Ed., and B. Th. degrees.

As a minister he served churches in Aberdeen, Warman, and Saskatoon. For many years he taught in schools in the Hepburn and Aberdeen areas of Saskatchewan before becoming Principal of the Hugh Cairns V.C. School in Saskatoon. Upon superannuation he taught senior literature classes for the Saskatoon Regional Community College.

His special interest in history led him to undertake research in the area of Mennonite migrations. Two earlier books - both FAST-EPP Genealogies - were published in 1967 and 1978 respectively.